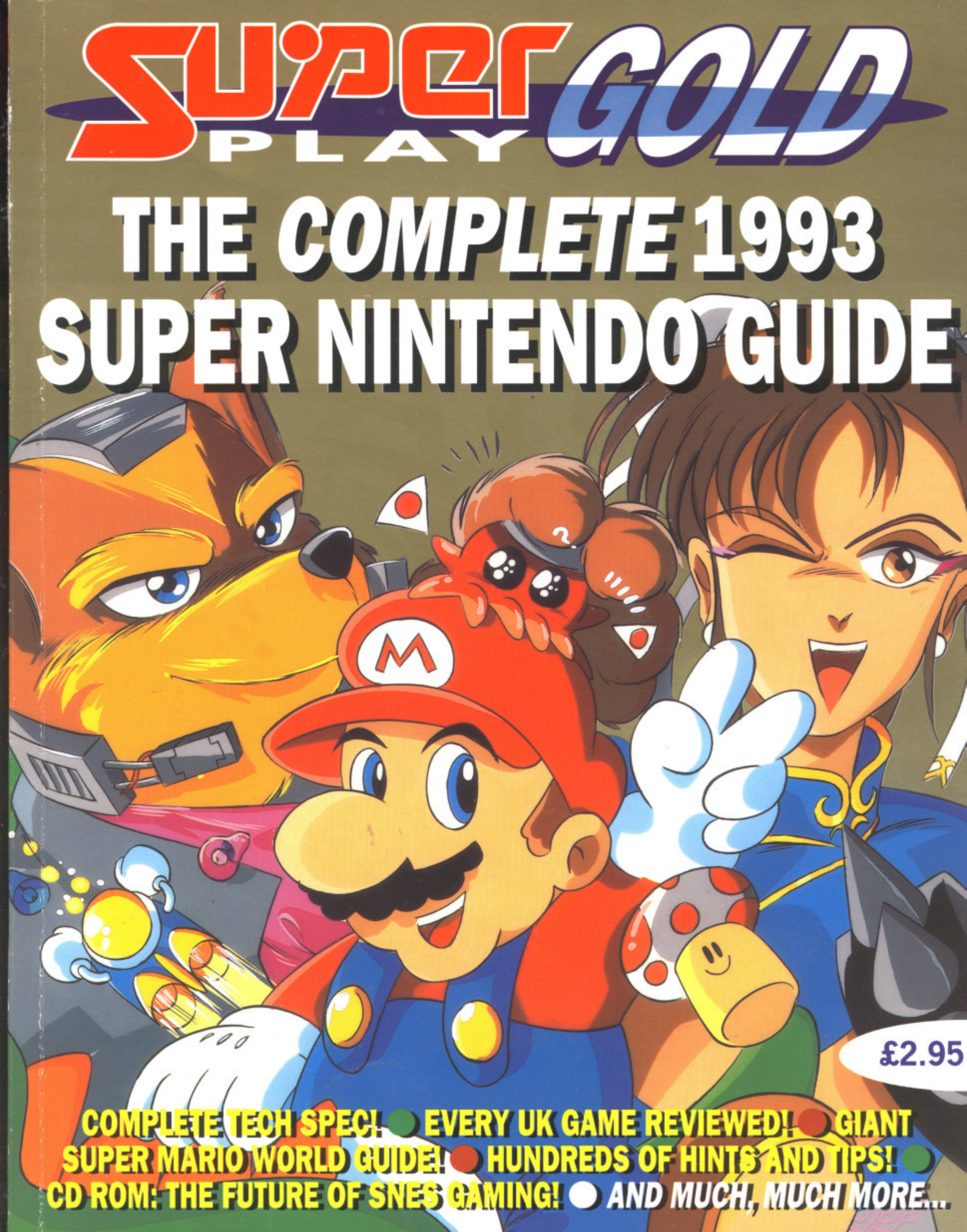
SUPER PLAY GOLD

THE COMPLETE 1993 SUPER NINTENDO GUIDE



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CONTENTS

Super Play: The Complete Super Nintendo Annual 1993

GIANT-SIZED SUMMER SPECIAL FEATURES!

The Super Nintendo Story.....4
Here it is – your complete guide to the genesis and history of the world's best games machine! Where does Nintendo the company come from? How did it get so big? When did it the Super Nintendo come out? We've got a behind-the-scenes look at the whole story.

Super Nintendo Tech Spec.....7
We take a good, hard look beneath the Super Nintendo's off-white case. Just what *does* lurk under there...?

Super Nintendo Spotter's Guide 8
We show you how to tell a UK from a US or Japanese machine – the easy way!

The UK Market.....9
We've talked about the Super NES abroad, but what about the UK story? Time to take a close-up look at what'se been happening over here, and what we can expect to see in the future.

PAL & SCART: all is revealed.....10
The Super Nintendo's complicated compatibility problems explained!

The Super Nintendo vs its rivals.....10
We put the Super NES up against the world's best games machines. Has it really got what it takes?

Special FX chips.....12
We take a look at DSP chips, Super FX chips, and other ways to enhance the already-considerable abilities of your machine. The best keeps getting better!

Super Nintendo add-ons 15
A close-up look at joysticks, adaptors and all the useful little bits and pieces you can buy for your Super Nintendo.

CD ROM: The Future of Super Nintendo gaming?.....18
We look at the forthcoming SNES CD system. How much will it cost? When's it coming? And how good is it *really*?

Super Nintendo charts.....21
Want to know what are the most popular games on your machine? Here's where you'll find out!

The world of import games 89
With the simple purchase of a handy adaptor, you can play all the latest games from Japan and America on your UK machine before they get released over here! Jonathan Davies investigates how, and points you in the direction of a few import games you really should try! The things you can pick up down your local Comet really are only the start...

Subscriptions.....96
Take advantage of our fabulous *Super Play* subscription offer here!

Super Store.....98
Super Nintendo goodies at giveaway prices! You'd be a fool to miss out!

EVERY UK RELEASE!

In these pages you'll find every Super Nintendo game released to date, including tips and player's guides to most of them!

Actraiser 24
The Addams Family.....24
The Addams Family: Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt.....25
Another World.....26
Battleclash 26
Axelay 27
Best Of The Best Championship Karate.....28
Blazing Skies 28
Buster Busts Loose 29
The Blues Brothers 30
Chessmaster.....30
Desert Strike 31
Dragon's Lair 32
Drakkhen.....33
F1 Exhaust Heat.....33
F-Zero 34
Final Fight.....35
George Foreman's KO Boxing.....35
Gods 36
Home Alone 36
Home Alone 2 37
James Bond Jnr 37
John Madden Football 38
Jimmy Connors' Pro Tennis Tour 39
Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja 39
Kick Off.....40
King Arthur's World.....40
Krusty's Super Funhouse.....41
The Legend Of Zelda 42
Lethal Weapon 44
Lemmings 44
Magic Sword.....45
Mario Paint 45
The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse.....46
NHLPA Hockey.....48
Paperboy 2 48
Parodius 49
Pebble Beach Golf Links.....50
PGA Tour Golf 50
Pilotwings 51
PitFighter 52
Populous 52
Pushover 53
Prince Of Persia.....53
Race Drivin' 54
Rival Turf 54
Road Runner 55
Road Riot 4WD 55
Robocop 3 56
Sim City.....56
Spiderman & The X-Men 57
Starwing.....58
Street Fighter II 60
Super Aleste 63
Super Adventure Island.....64
Super Battletank.....64
Super Double Dragon.....65
Super Castlevania IV 66
Super Ghouls 'n' Ghosts 67
Super Mario Kart 68
Super Mario World 70
Super Off Road 74
Super Pang.....74
Super Probotector.....75
Super R-Type 76
Super Smash TV 76
Super Soccer 77
Super Star Wars.....78
Super Strike Gunner.....79
Super SWIV.....79
Super Tennis.....80
Super WWF Wrestlemania 81
Suzuki F1.....81
Syvalion.....82
Test Drive 2: The Duel.....82
The Terminator 83
Top Gear 83
Turtles IV: Turtles In Time.....84
Ultraman 84
UN Squadron 85
Warp Speed 86
Wing Commander 86
World Class Rugby.....87
World League Basketball.....87

SUPER PLAY GOLD: THE COMPLETE SUPER NINTENDO ANNUAL 1993

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WELCOME TO SUPER PLAY GOLD

Super Play Gold: The Complete Super Nintendo Guide 1993 is a special one-off magazine, brought to you by the editors of *Super Play*, Britain's biggest-selling and best respected Super Nintendo magazine. Its purpose is simple – to help you get the very most out of your Super Nintendo. In it we look at the machine, its origins and history, its technical specification, and its software – all the things that go towards making it, quite simply, the most important (and, yes, best) games machine in the world today. If we've done our job right, anything there is to know about the Super Nintendo that isn't in *Super Play Gold*, just isn't worth knowing.

So why this special edition? Well, as those who know *Super Play* will be more than aware, we try to stay on the cutting edge of Super Nintendo gaming, reviewing all the hottest new releases from Japan and America a long time before they come out in the UK. With *Super Play Gold*, however, it's very different – in it, we're concentrating almost exclusively on the official scene.

This being the case, the bulk of the magazine's pages are devoted to new in-depth reviews of every Super Nintendo game released so far in this country, with tips and player's guides to most of them. First, though, we take you through the background and history of the Super Nintendo, looking at its technical specification, it's strengths and its weakness, and how it stacks up against other games machines. Whether you've just bought your Super Nintendo, or are an old hand, there should be something in these pages for you.

There's not much more to say really – not at this stage. I hope you enjoy this special edition of *Super Play*, I hope you learn a few things from it while you're doing so, and look forward to seeing you in the pages of the regular magazine. After all, I really do think that if you're into the Super Nintendo, and you're not into SP, you're missing out. Just ask anyone who reads it...

Matt Bielby
Editor, *Super Play*

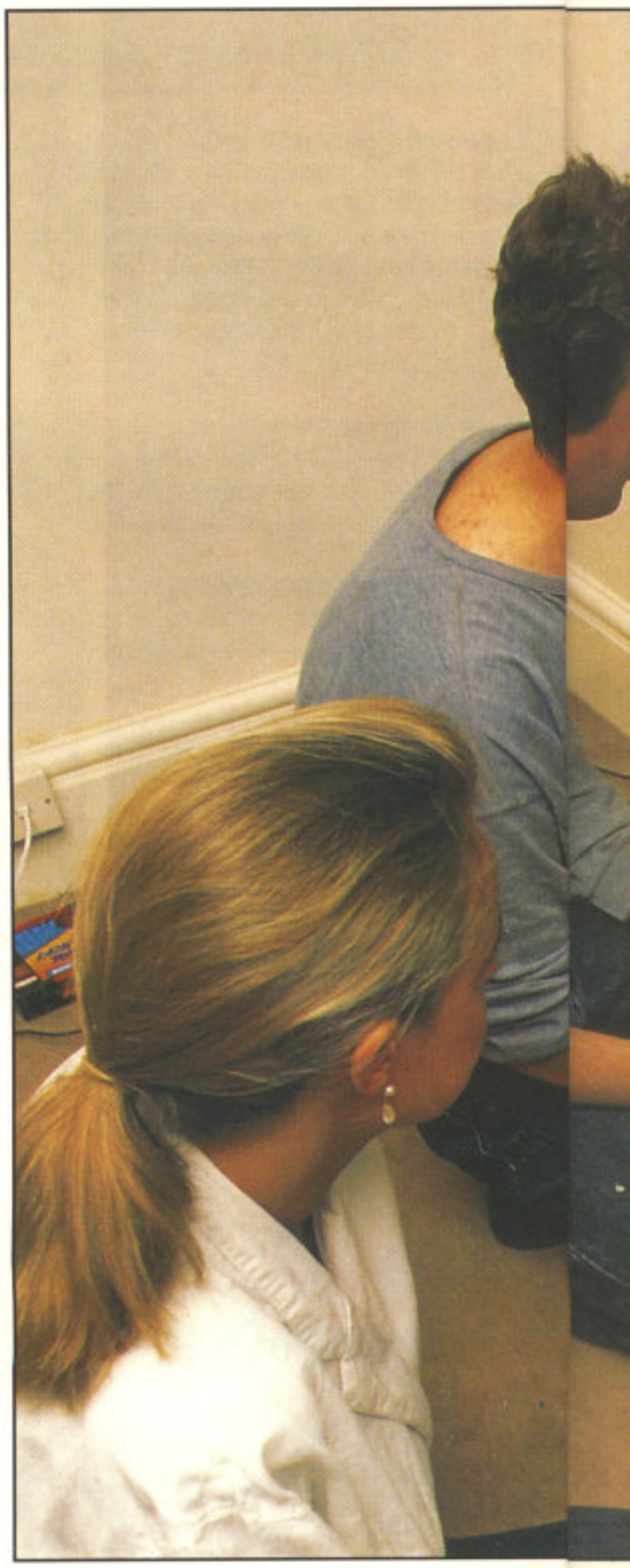
The Super

So, where do little

The Super Nintendo story starts in Tokyo, on the 21st of November 1991. That's when the first Super Famicoms (that's what the Japanese call the Super Nintendo) appeared in shops up and down the country. The first American models, now re-named Super Nintendoes, appeared in US stores some nine months later, in August 1991.

Those are the basic facts. If you look at things in perspective, however, the story really begins a good eight years in earlier, in 1983, with Nintendo's first stab at a games machine – the 8-bit Famicom ('Family-computer'). It was this famous machine, re-named the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) outside Japan, that saw Nintendo suddenly leap to prominence on the world stage. Prior to the NES, Nintendo – an old, traditional company, well known in Japan for manufacturing playing cards and the like – were not a major success story. They certainly weren't a company capable of beating out the likes of Sony to become the country's highest pre-tax profit earner, as looks likely to happen in the financial year ending March 1994.

The Famicom is what changed Nintendo's fortunes. It was a massive hit – by 1985, more than 6.5 million of the things had been shifted in Japan, tempting Nintendo into taking the major step of launching their baby in the United States. It was good timing – existing American console manufacturers, like Atari, Mattel and Coleco, who had risen to prominence on the console boom of the early '80s, were in serious financial trouble, leaving the market wide open. The NES was launched in 1986, and by 1988 had sold 7 million, with 33 million games shifted to go with them. Nintendo now had around 75% of the market, but that wasn't the end – not by a long way. Indeed, by 1990, the US game market had grown to be worth $4 billion, with Nintendo controlling a massive $3.4 of it.



WHY WAS THE NES SO SUCCSSFUL?

Two reasons for the great success of the NES spring to mind. Most obviously, there are the reasons that have made Japanese companies so successful in all areas of industry in the post-war era – a strong work ethic, competitive prices, aggressive marketing, and a determination to keep very tight control over every aspect of their businesses.

However, beyond that, just as importantly, and specific to Nintendo, there's the company's attitude to their product. Quite simply, it's a firm with an ethic that insists on high quality, both in manufacturing quality and in game and hardware design. Not only have Nintendo

Nintendo Story

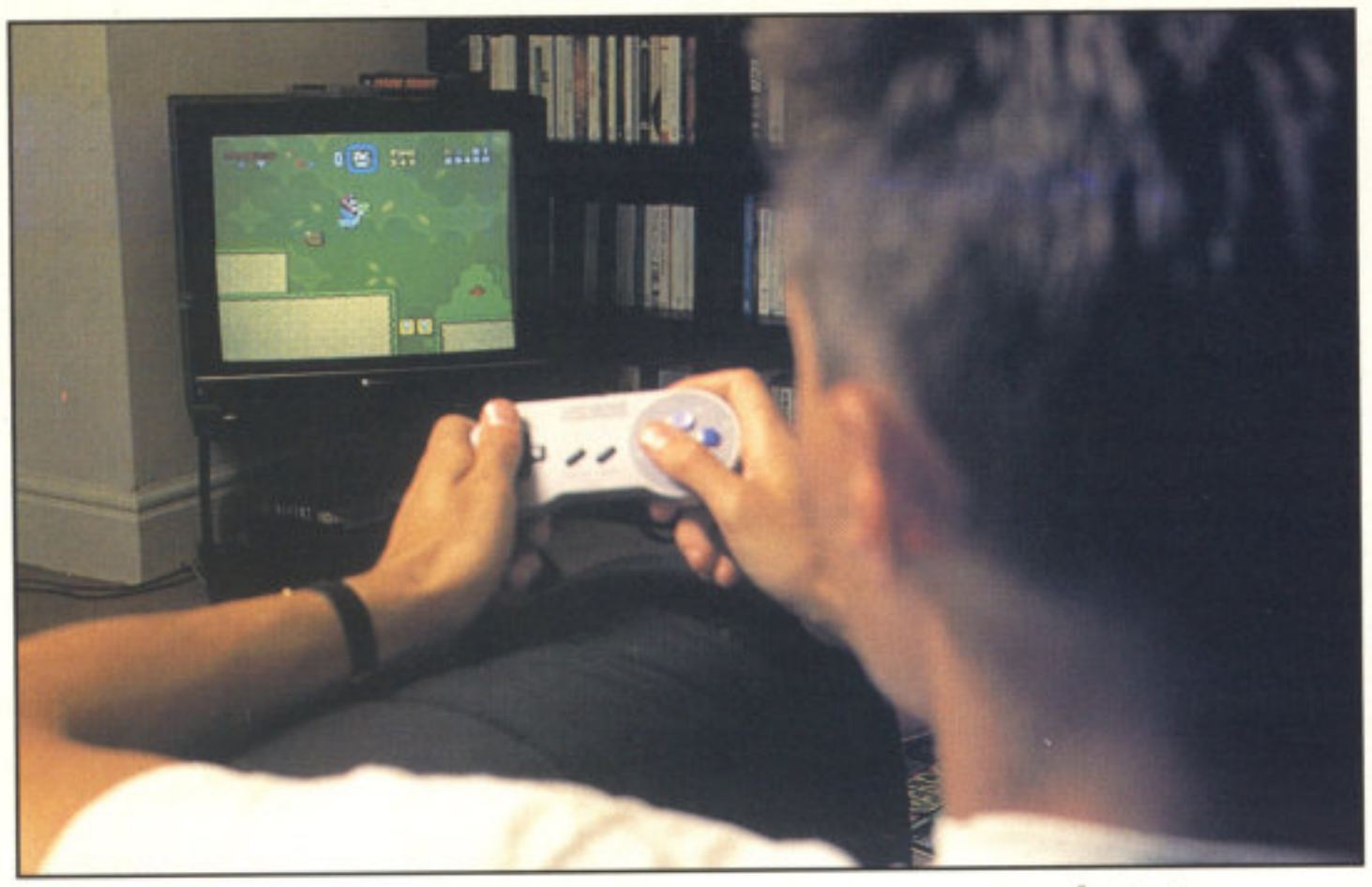
game consoles come from?

very deliberately set out to attract and keep the world's best programmers, they've made sure to give them the resourses they need to do their best work too. It's a combination that allows them to come up with the best games in the world, time and time again. Equally, they've attracted and kept the best third party developers – Konami, Capcom and so on – to work on their machines too. We'll take a look at the importance of these later on.

SEGA: NINTENDO'S FLY IN THE OINTMENT

Throughout Nintendo's recent success years, however, there's been one fly in the ointment. A company called Sega – also Japanese, but a younger, more dynamic set-up than Nintendo in many respects – also had a games machine, the Master System. It was technically superior to the NES, but – in the States and Japan at least – not marketed as well. It also lacked quite the vast range of high quality games Nintendo boasted.

Sega needed a new weapon in the battle to increase their market share, and they got it in the form of the Sega Mega



Drive (called Genesis in America) – a new generation of games machine. The Mega Drive, launched in Japan in '88, and America a year later – and boasting graphics and sound far superior to anything the NES or Master System could manage – soon found fans in Japan, but it was the American Genesis version that really took off. Within months, it had started making massive in-roads into the Nintendo dominated US market.

It was clear that sooner or later Nintendo would need a new machine too – and one good enough to show the Mega Drive a clean pair of heels in every department. Worried Nintendo fans started to fear their company might be leaving it a little late – the NES was looking more and more geriatric with every passing month, with only its vast American user-base and the continuing release of high quality software keeping it afloat. Ever the pragmatists, Nintendo seems supremely unworried by the predicament – indeed, many experts suspect they deliberately held back their new machine for fear its existance would damage software sales in the still-potentially-vast NES market. Eventually, however, the company bit the bullet, and their Mega Drive beater – and we are, of course, talking about the Super Nintendo – appeared. It was everything Nintendo fans could have wanted, and more.

AT LAST – THE SUPER NINTENDO!

For months prior to the Super Nintendo's release, speculation about what the new machine might be like was the talk of Japan. That it would be 16-bit was clear, but beyond that opinions differed wildly. Nintendo themselves remained tight lipped throughout it all, but secretly they must have been pleased – one thing all the speculation ensured was that *everybody* wanted to know what the new machine would be like. Public interest – fueled by demos of early games like *Flight Club* (later to be renamed *Pilotwings* and become one of the machine's early success stories) – was enormous.

Eventually November 21st – the day of release – came around. Queues formed outside the big electronic and computer shops across Japan, with many eager punters camping out on the streets the night before. The doors opened – and within hours, every Super Famicom in Tokyo had been sold, along with copies of the only two games available on that first day of release, *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero*. The new machine was, as everyone had predicted, an immediate success.

And what's the situation now? Well, the Super Nintendo is top dog in Japan, alright, with the Mega Drive trailing far behind (indeed, NEC's PC Engine, never officially imported into the UK, is a more popular games machine in Japan than the Mega Drive right now). In America, the two machines are currently neck-and-neck, but the Super Nintendo looks poised to create and then widen a gap throughout the '93-'94 period.

NINTENDO AND THE EUROPEAN CHALLENGE

The only hole in Nintendo's armour is Europe, and – in particular – the UK, where the Super Nintendo still trails well behind the Mega Drive. Why's this? Well, for a start it has to be said that, until very recently, Nintendo haven't put a massive amount of effort into growing the UK market. Indeed, they allowed Sega to build up a firm lead back in 8-bit days – and slick Sega advertising, a wide range of games and a good head start has seen the Mega Drive, too, build up a commanding lead. Nintendo are catching up (strong sales at Christmas 1992 meant there's now only two Mega Drive's for each Super Nintendo, while previously there were three or four), but are still very much in second place – a fact that sometimes shocks hardened gamefreaks, who know how much better the SNES is, and how much better SNES software is too!

To combat what's becoming an increasingly embarrassing second-place status, the early months of '93 have seen Nintendo get much more closely involved in the European side of things, setting up their own UK office to take over the marketing of their machines in this country. (Previously they left that side of things to the UK subsidiary of giant Japanese toy company Bandai.) Many informed observers expect this to result in even more aggressive marketing than before, with a price war possibly looming between Sega and Nintendo. Whatever happens, things are brewing for an interesting fight at Christmas 1993...

SUPER NES TIMELINE

1983
The Famicom, Nintendo's first games machine, first launched in Japan.

1985
More than 6.5 million Famicom's sold in Japan alone.

1986
Nintendo Entertainment System (a re-named Famicom) launched in the United States.

1987
NES launched in the UK, to less than rapturous response. Sega's Master System outsells it, but the real winner in the games machine stakes is the Atari ST computer and, increasingly, the Commodore Amiga.

1988
Over 7 million NES units sold in the United States by this point. The Sega Mega Drive launched in Japan.

1989
The 16-bit Sega Genesis (a renamed Mega Drive) launched in the US, to great media coverage and very strong sales.

1990
Super Famicom launched in Japan on November 21. Only two games are available at the time.

1991
Super Nintendo (a renamed Super Famicom) launched in the United States in August.

1992
Super Nintendo gets launched in the UK in April.

1993
700 Super Nintendo's sold in the UK by the start of the year. In the spring Nintendo take over the marketing of their machine in the UK, with eventual market domination surely the underlying aim...

SUPER NINTENDO TECHNICAL LOWDOWN

So, what's underneath the Super Nintendo's chewing-gum grey box?

With the exception of it's processor – a slightly strange bit of kit we'll get back to in a minute – the Super Nintendo boasts a suitably state-of-the-art set of internals. Seperate picture processing units combine to give 3D background scaling and rotation – the famous Mode 7, for instance, allows a background image to be shrunk, enlarged, distorted into 3D or anything you like really – and 8-bit colour layering, which gives superb under-water and shadowing effects. An interlace mode – known as Mode 6 – can support a very detailed simulated resolution of 512x448 pixels in up to 128 colours, while the machine can manage up to 128 sprites on screen at any one time, the largest being a whopping 64x64 pixels. Seven custom graphics modes – such as the Mode 6 and 7 already mentioned – allow the Super Nintendo to do with ease graphical effects other machines (often much bigger, more expensive and more powerful) would struggle over, or simply couldn't manage at all.

But you don't need to understand all this technical guff. Basically, all it means is that Nintendo have done a stunning job on the graphics side of things, creating a machine that can manage some of the most incredible effects – its potential in this area has barely been scratched yet. Neil Jackson of Argonaut Software, the team behind the Super FX chip, perhaps put it best: 'Nintendo have done a bang up job on the graphics side of things. Their custom hardware is stunning – Mode 7, for instance, is a joy to use and really makes the machine worthwhile. It makes all the speed problems worth putting up with.'

Speed and slow-down: a real problem?

Ah yes. The speed. The Super Nintendo, you see, has an Achilles' heel – its processor. This is a very strange beast indeed. Presumably to maintain compatibility with the 8-bit NES – an adaptor allowing you to run NES games on your SNES is due for release in July in the US – Nintendo used a processor (or 'CPU') that can be switched between three speeds. This sounds great, but isn't – the fastest of these speeds, you see (3.58 Mhz) could only in all honestly be described as 'slow', and the other two are even worse. 'Underneath it all it's slower than a Spectrum,' says Neil Jackson, and he's right – for the first six months of its existence, many Super Nintendo owners were convinced they'd been sold a lemon. After all, what good is a machine with brilliant graphics if things slow down to a juddery halt every time the screen becomes packed with sprites? One look at early shoot-'em-ups like *Gradius II* or *Super R-Type* – and, indeed, some more recent releases, like *Bio Metal* – shows exactly where those fears came from. Fortunately, however, it now seems to have been as much a problem based on programmer laziness or unfamiliarity with the machine as an innate weakness. Recent releases – *Super Aleste* springs to mind – show the sprite handling capabilities of the machine can handle it after all, it just takes skilled creators. Phew!

IMPORT VS UK MACHINES: THAT DIFFERENCE IN FULL

The British version of the Super Nintendo has one big fault – and there's no easy way to put it either. It simply isn't as *good* as the imported US or Japanese models. Why? Well, it's all to do with the TV system we use in the UK – PAL, as opposed to NTSC used in the other two countries. Without getting too technical, foreign machines run at 60 Hz and UK ones at 50 Hz, meaning we have to put up with not only a picture that's been squashed down in size by about 17% (giving ugly black borders at the top and bottom of the screen), but 17% slower speed too. The speed's the really bad thing – it makes games that much easier to do well at (17% easier, in fact, as that's how much slower all the baddies react). Before you fly through the roof at this news, however (though you're perfectly entitled to do so), remember that Sega's Mega Drive has exactly the same problem – UK ones run 17% slower too. Though all gameplayers loose out because of this, the real loss is made by British owners who also have recent TVs, equipped with a SCART plug at the back – their TVs are quite capable of handling the foreign machines' 60Hz signal, and so would have been perfectly capable of showing the full screen picture and so on on a UK SNES too, if only the UK SNES had come equipped with a 50/60Hz switch. (A perfectly feasible feat, technically.) That Nintendo didn't see fit to do this has to be seen as just cheap on their part.

Here's yer standard UK machine, this one showing *Super Mario Land*. Looks OK, doesn't it – or, at least, it would do if you hadn't already cribbed a peek at the picture below. The thing is, you see, that the picture's been squashed, with ugly black bars at the top and bottom of the screen.

Here, for handy comparison, is a US machine playing exactly the same game (to do this it has to connected via a SCART lead, as is possible on this fairly modern telly). Look at the difference in picture size – it fills up the entire screen, while the graphics are now no longer distorted.

SO WHAT'S THE UK STORY?

Join us for an in-depth look at the Super NES market in Britain, including why grey imports continue to thrive...

American Super Nintendoes are the most popular amongst hardcore British gamefreaks – they're cheap to buy, they play all the latest import games, and they can be made to run at full speed on a modern British TV like this one.

Though it may surprise you to learn this, imported Japanese Super Famicoms started to become available in the UK almost as soon as the machine became available on the streets of Tokyo, often coming into the country via Hong Kong, through the already-established network of small mail order companies and specialist console game shops. One reason this network has built up is that the NEC PC Engine, a very popular 8-bit console in Japan that offers superior graphics and speed to the NES or Sega Master system, was never officially imported into the UK. Small-scale operators could thus build up reasonable businesses importing the machines for sale to the hardcore of dedicated gamesplayers interested in the thing and its software – one such company, PC Engine supplies of Newcastle-under-Lyme, has since transmuted into Console Concepts, Britain's largest 'grey importer' of Japanese games machines.

Alongside other high tech machinery like the Mega Drive (before Sega started officially bringing it into the UK) and the expensive Neo Geo, early Super Famicoms and, later, US-spec Super Nintendos became the hot games machine to have. It is clear that businesses like Console Concepts could grow fast in such circumstances, but their continuing success – after the Super Nintendo became available in big retail stores in every high street in the country – perhaps takes a bit of explaining.

There are two main reasons. For a start, the UK market is still tiny compared to the American and Japanese ones, and many more games are released there than over here – the only way a UK gameplayer is going to be able to get hold of many of these is through a grey importer. Similarly, the latest hot releases of big name games – things like the recent *Starfox* (*Starwing* in the UK), say – almost always happen in the States and Japan before they do here, and if you're particularly keen to get hold of a game before anyone else on your block, again the only real way you're going to be able to do it is by going through a grey importer.

Many of these have now become so efficient they are able to sell games in the UK almost on the exact day they become available abroad – indeed, Console Concepts were actually selling *Street Fighter II* in the UK a couple of days before it was even released in Japan! How? Well, the story goes something like this:

There are so many shops in Japan, you see, millions of copies of a big new game have to be made in advance of the release date to go round them all (a large proportion of Japanese sales of a new game are made on the day of release, and it's a disaster if a shop should run out of copies too early). Thus, in the weeks before release, there tend to be thousands of copies kicking around, some of which get sidetracked to Hong Kong, and in turn make their way into the UK. Mind you, you have to pay for this sort of promptness – Console Concepts sold their first batch of 400 copies of *SFII* for £90 a piece, twice the official Japanese price!

The is another main reason for the continuing success of the grey import market, though. You see, the sad fact is that, despite the existance of the official UK machine, there is still a strong demand for imported Japanese and American spec machines. Why? Well, for one thing they're no more expensive to buy over here, particularly the US ones, but mainly it's because – and we said it on page seven, but it's still probably worth saying it again – they're actually better than the UK high street model. Faster. And with better graphics. As we look at the three different types of machine available to the UK gameplayer, we'll go into a little bit more detail as to the reasons why.

THE SUPER NINTENDO SPOTTER'S GUIDE

So, what's the difference?

Don't fancy yours much! For the full story on the differences between these three machines, read on...

There are three basic models of the Super Nintendo available in this country for you to buy – the official UK model, directly compatible with the UK TV system, and available in high streets up and down the country, and two imported models, from America and Japan. Let's look at them all in turn, shall we – highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each machine as we get to them.

The official UK Super Nintendo

This is the familiar model, as seen in TV advertisements and shop windows up and down the country. Convenient, reliable, easy to get hold of, and coming with a good one-year warranty, it's the natural choice for most UK gameplayers. It's currently available in a number of different forms, at increasingly low prices – there's the so-called 'Solus' set (just a Super Nintendo, with one controller, and that's it), the *Super Mario World* pack (a SNES, a copy of *Super Mario World*, and one controller), the Super Scope pack (a SNES, a Super Scope light gun, a cart with six Scope games on it and one controller), the *Street Fighter II* pack (the SNES, a copy of *SFII* and one controller – though you'll really need another one to get the most out of SFII!) and a new *Starwing* pack.

The big difference between the UK model and foreign machines is that the British one is a PAL machine, and thus directly compatible with Britain's PAL TV system. It can be plugged straight into a normal UK television, making it very convenient, but unfortunately there is a price – borders at the top and bottom of the screen, and 17% slower speed.

If you use the optional SCART plug, you get a picture that's slightly clearer and with stereo sound, though if you *do* possess a TV with SCART capability, a UK Super Nintendo may not be the best bet – if you use a foreign machine with your TV you'll get the full-sized picture, and the faster speed. We'll look at this when we look at the foreign machines.

With your UK Super Nintendo you can play all the games officially available in UK shops – over 80 of them, all reviewed in this special – along with imported US or Japanese games, if you use an adaptor.

The US Super Nintendo

The US Super Nintendo looks completely different to the UK or Japanese versions – and is distinctly ugly compared to its more 'finished' looking cousins – but is basically the same underneath. Its tech spec is identical to the Japanese machine's, being intended for the NTSC TV system used in both countries, which means that only owners of TVs with a SCART socket at the back will be able to run one using a UK TV. The advantage of this, however, is that the games will run at the speed and size their creators intended (see the entry on the UK machine) – a great boon. Build quality and reliablity are excellent.

The American machine can run imported US carts 'as is', can run official UK carts with a Universal Adaptor, and can run Japanese carts either with an adaptor, or on its own if you break off two little plastic tabs inside the cartridge slot, thus allowing the differently shaped Jap carts to fit.

US model machines tend to be cheaper in the UK (in the States they sell for around £55!) than Japanese ones – from a grey importer one should cost no more than an official UK machine. One year warranties are often available.

The Japanese Super Famicom

The same shape as the UK machine – only the names tell them apart. The Jap model is still imported in some numbers, but is less popular than the essentially identical US model because the difference in exchange rates makes them more expensive. Comes with very short joypad leads!

NEVER BE EMBARRASSED BY MISTAKING A JAP MACHINE FOR A US ONE AGAIN!

Here's the familiar British high street Super Nintendo – identical from the outside to the Japanese model, writing aside, but configured to run on UK PAL TVs internally.

The American model is a very different looking machine. Quite what possessed Nintendo to shape it like a purple brick isn't clear, but it must have seemed a good idea at the time. Looks aside, however, this is perhaps the best machine for many users.

The Japanese Super Famicom has the added attraction of being the original, if you like, and shares its attractive exterior with the British model, though its insides are closer to the American one's. Becoming rare in the UK because the exchange rate makes them expensive to buy.

The Sega Mega Drive is the Super Nintendo's biggest rival in world terms – a slick, very well-marketed machine, with plenty of software, and good graphics.

HEAD TO HEAD AGAINST ITS BIGGEST RIVALS:

The Super Nintendo takes on the world

So, just how good is the Super Nintendo? We've put it up against every other major games platform to see. Everything from basic price, through sheer ability to looks and convenience of buying games has been taken into account, giving you the complete overall picture. At the end of each comparison we give you a 'seriousness of challenge' rating (10 being a very serious alternative, 0 being completely worthless), giving you an at-a-glance guide whether the machine in question really is a serious rival to the Super Nintendo or not.

The machine that came before the Super Nintendo, the NES's great strength is the vast number of good – and many great – games available for it. Next to the Super NES, this old fashioned, limited 8-bit machine looks fairly unimpressive, though, with flat colours and blocky graphics. However, it is very cheap (around £50 now), and it does have oodles of software support. The new adaptor allowing you to play US NES carts on a US spec Super NES rather takes away from the point of ownership, though.

Seriousness of challenge rating: 3

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

The Nintendo NES system's traditional rival, Sega's Master System has similar strengths – cheap basic price and oodles of games. Always more popular in Europe than the NES (the reverse was true in most of the rest of the world), it is, despite being 8-bit, a technically superior machine – the graphics are undeniable better, and it uses more colours. However, Master System software is generally markedly inferior in terms of gameplay to NES stuff, making the system currently a pretty poor buy.

Seriousness of challenge rating: 2

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

The Super Nintendo's great rival, the 16-bit Mega Drive has a number of things in its favour – technical excellence (graphics are approaching Super NES standard, and the processor runs faster, making it easier for programmers to come up with fast-moving games), lots of games (more than the Super Nintendo, though as the gap narrows this is becoming less important), and a very strong image. On the downside, Super Nintendo tricks like Mode 7 make the Mega Drive look increasingly lacklustre, while the difference in software quality is perhaps even more pronounced here than it was in the NES/Master System wars – basically, lots of Mega Drive carts are expensive crap. Good, then, but undoubtedly not as good as the Super Nintendo.

Seriousness of challenge rating: 7

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

Sega's newest weapon in the console wars, the Mega CD uses the basic Mega Drive hardware (indeed, it's basically a Mega Drive add-on), but the much greater storage capacity of CDs allows for much larger games. Sounds great in theory, but it's expensive, and the software we've seen so far looks decidedly poor, doing little existing systems couldn't manage – it's Sega's software quality problem again. It looks increasingly likely that the Super Nintendo CD system (see elsewhere for

details) will blow it out of the water when that becomes available next year.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 6

SEGA MEGA CD

The second most popular games machine in Japan – yes, the PC Engine does better there than the Mega Drive! – this 8-bit machine, now available in a number of forms, including a CD model, is a bit of a little marvel.

Graphics are almost up to Mega Drive/ Super NES standards (amazing for an 8-bit machine), while software quality is excellent – until recently many of the most dedicated gameplayers still preferred this machine to the Super Nintendo, though most are now swinging Nintendo's way as more Super NES games become available. The PC Engine comes in various versions, has a CD drive optiion, ad is particularly good for shoot-'em-ups and role playing games. A great machine, then, but never officially sold in the UK, and now probably a little long in the tooth to be thought of as a serious rival.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 5

NEC PC ENGINE

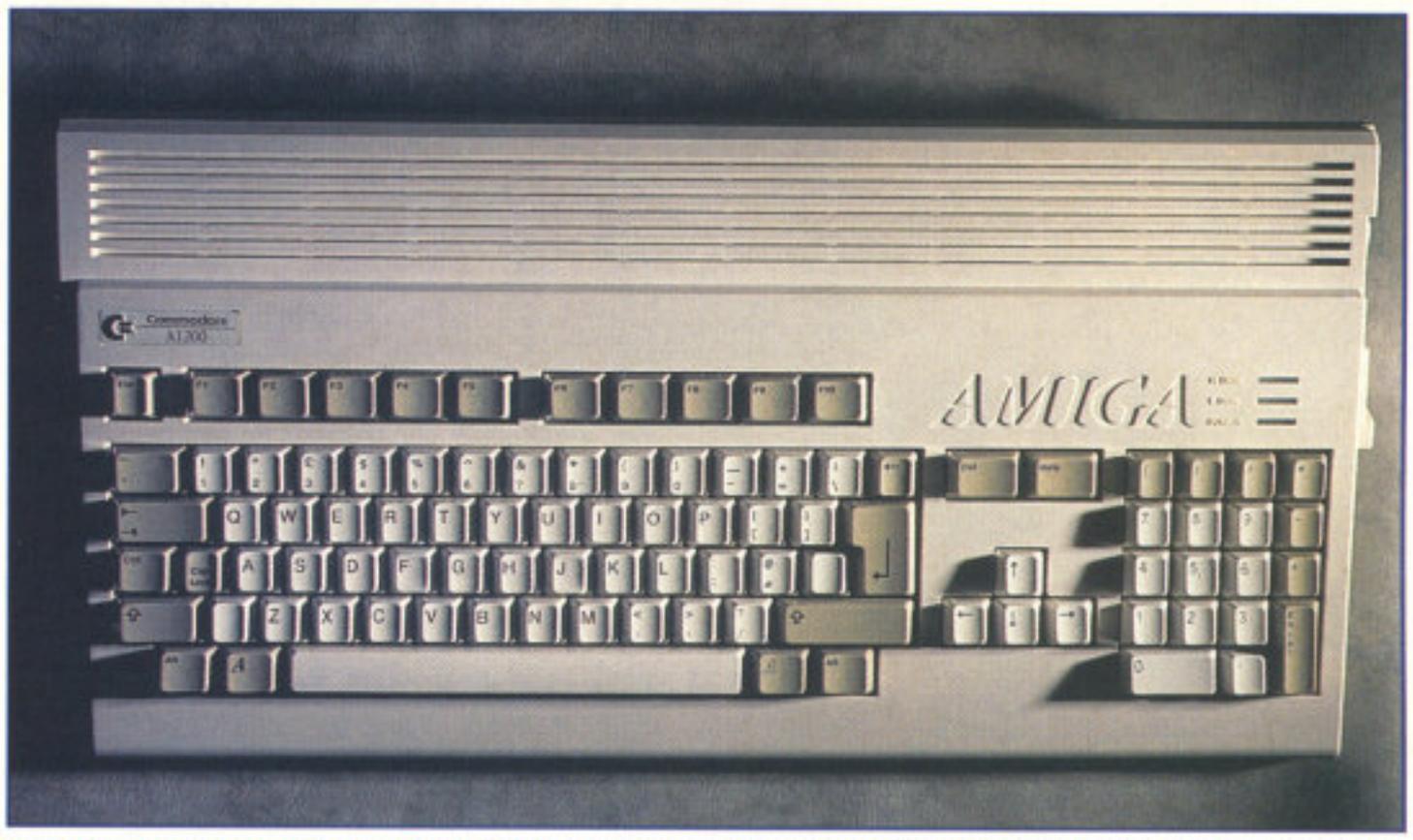
The incredibly expensive Neo Geo is basically an arcade machine in a smaller box – graphics and speed are first rate, with the games looking (yes) even better than Super Nintendo ones. Unfortunately, most of the software seems to be a succession of very similar beat-'em-ups and sports games, limiting its appeal somewhat. This was always going to be something of a specialist machine then, but it's undeniably rather brilliant at what it does.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 5

SNK NEO GEO

A cheap home computer, with excellent graphics and plenty of software support, the Commodore Amiga has, until recently, been the most popular machine for UK gameplayers, and may yet make a late rally. On the plus side it has lots of games – many available now for less than a quarter of the price of a typical SNES game – and can, of course, be used for all the other things home computers can be used for. On the minus side, the basic machine costs more than the SNES, the graphics aren't as impressive, and many of the games aren't up to the same level of quality. The sheer volume of releases has been drying up for over a year now too.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 7

COMMODORE AMIGA

The Amiga's traditional rival, the ST has inferior (though still fairly attractive) graphics, and has recently fallen rather out of favour – good new games are few and far between. No longer a serious challenger as a games machine, then – hardly anything ever comes out for it anymore – but it's still popular for many other computing uses, particularly those that are music related.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 2



The Commodore Amiga remains Britain's most popular home computer, being cheap, versatile and easily upgradable. Plenty of games for it too – many of very high quality, and lots cheaper than SNES carts.

ATARI ST

IBM PC compatible computers, the world's standard as far as home computers are concerned, have been popular as games machines for a long time in the US and Japan, and their use for games playing has been increasing in the UK too over the last couple of years. Hundreds of new releases – often of incredible quality – make it an excellent machine, while the standard of graphics of the more expensive models can put even the Super NES to shame. Cost is the big objection – the games aren't cheap (similar to SNES prices), while you wouldn't get much change out of £1000 for a top quality machine. Still, PCs are becoming increasingly popular among gameplayers – for the serious gamefreak, a decent PC and a Super Nintendo (and plenty of cash to spend on games) would probably be the ideal combination.
Seriousness of challenge rating: 8

PAL AND SCART: THOSE DIFFERENCES IN FULL

You might be getting a bit confused at this point – what's all this PAL and SCART nonsense? Why won't my American Super Nintendo work on my UK TV? And so forth. Long term *Super Play* readers will have heard the answer to this (about a million times), and will probably want to skip this bit, but for the rest of you, an explanation.

It's all to do with TV systems. Here in the UK we use a system called PAL, which updates the picture 50 times a second (we call that 50 Hz), while in the States and Japan they use a different TV system, NTSC, which updates things 60 times a second (60 hz). Now, while PAL TVs are actually better at displaying a TV picture than NTSC ones (the screen is made up of more lines, which gives a sharper image), they're not so good at computer games, because of the speed of the screen update – that's why a UK Super Nintendo connected through the aerial lead to a UK TV gives a slower game than a US or Japanese Super NES connected to a US or Jap telly.

Where SCART comes into play is like this. The 21-pin SCART socket on the back of many modern TVs and monitors (sometimes also marked 'Euroconnector') can support an image that updates at either 50 or 60 Hz quite happily, and also support a full screen picture. Thus, if you connect a US or Jap machine to a UK TV using the SCART socket, you get an image just as big and quick moving as you would using an NTSC TV. Perfect!

So why, you might be asking, can't I connect my UK Super NES through SCART to get the same effect? The reason is, unfortunately, a degree of laziness or cost-cutting on Nintendo's part. You see, your UK SNES won't allow the faster speed, even though a SCART TV is perfectly capable of displaying it – the UK SNES contains a modulator that slows everything down from its natural 60 Hz to 50 Hz to fit PAL TVs, and this can't be disabled. If a switch had been added to the UK Super NES allowing you to bypass the modulator, UK owners would be able to enjoy their games as they were meant to be played. Nintendo were simply too cheap to do so.

CUSTOMISING THE SUPER NINTENDO:

How DSP and other game enhancement chips increase the power of your gameplaying

A whole new generation of Super Nintendo games are on the way – and we're not talking Super Nintendo CD here, either! No, these games are with us aready, and will run on a standard Super NES with no additional hardware needed. They feature better graphics, faster speed – and, with luck, more involving gameplay too. They are, of course, games that feature special cartridge-mounted game enhancement chips, and we're going to be seeing a lot more of them in the months to come.

So far only a handful of games have been released using special game enhancement chips – things like *Pilotwings*, *Super Mario Kart* and *Dungeon Master*. These three all use Nintendo's Digital Signal Processor (DSP) chip, Seta's new *Exhaust Heat 2* uses Seta's own variation on the same theme, while *Starwing* – Nintendo's most recent mega-hit – uses a different chip, called the Super FX, which gives this game a whole new range of abilities. All, however, do much the same thing – enhance the power of your Super Nintendo. We'll go into more detail on each of these later.

But first, why are special chips needed? Part of the answer to this can be found in the limitations of the Super Nintendo's processor, as detailed elsewhere in this special magazine. Quite simply, it's too slow to handle many of the things top game designers are now demanding of it – and the need to keep ahead of Sega's Mega Drive and (particularly) Mega CD means game designers are pushing things all the time. The answer – at least in the short term – is not to change the technology of the Super Nintendo, but to add special chips that'll enhance its capabilities for those games that need it. Sure, the extra chips make chip-enhanced cartridges more expensive to manufacture, and thus more expensive to the consumer (a definite bad thing), but on the plus side it means we're getting better games – it's up to you to decide if the trade-off is worth it.

STARWING, AND THE NEW SUPER FX CHIP

The most exciting development in terms of cartridge-enhancement chips is, of course, the Super FX chip, as developed by UK-based 3D specialists Argonaut, in conjunction with Nintendo. The first, and so far only, game to be released using it is *Starwing* (*Starfox* in the rest of the world), a shoot-'em-up using solid 3D graphics not for complicated flight sim-style things, but simple blasting. It only takes one look at *Starwing* to see how special it is – compare the 3D here with the 3D in, say, *Race Drivin'*, and you'll see we're talking a simply astounding leap in quality. Just check out the pics...

Though Argonaut developed the Super FX chip, much of the game's design was thought up at Nintendo in Japan, including these neat little pilot characters.

The game gives you three routes that you can fly, but each is essentially the same mission. Here we are in orbit above a planet, aliens coming thick and fast.

This extra cost is an important factor to games publishers as well as consumers. Before electing to use one, a games company has to make sure that the game *really* is going to be different enough from what's gone before to justify the price, or that they're really going to sell enough of them to absorb the extra cost of the chip if they decide to absorb it into the normal price point. It can prove to be a tricky decision to make.

With this all borne in mind, then, let's look at the individual game enhancement chips that are currently available and in use, and the games that you can enjoy them in.

Nintendo's DSP chip

This, the most common of the game enhancement chips, first appeared on the very early Super Nintendo release *Pilotwings* (a game that came out only weeks after the Super Famicom's Japanese debut in 1990) – the use of special chips was something Nintendo had obviously decided upon even before the launch of the machine. This, of course, raises a very obvious question. Why, if it was available, wasn't the technology capable of handling a graphics-intensive game like *Pilotwings* incorporated into the Super Nintendo in the first place, rather than simply stuck onto the game carts themselves?

The obvious answer, of course, is that Nintendo deliberately decided to leave this technology out. To allow for a decently competitive Japanese price point, they needed to keep the cost of manufacturing the new machine as low as possible – and if that meant that in the future they'd have to incorporate new chips into the carts of games that needed it, then they had no problem with that. It was something Nintendo already had experience of, after all – equivalents of the DSP chip were used on a number of NES games (*Super Mario 3*, most famously), allowing the 8-bit Nintendo to do things like display more colours than would otherwise have been possible.

The use of special chips have other advantages for Nintendo too. After all, being given a DSP to work with – hopefully allowing some sort of new visual effect, never before seen in games – could be used as a sort of reward and incentive to development teams. Hopefully they'd then be so insired by the new technical capabilities that they'd do their utmost to make every aspect of their new game stunning, providing Nintendo (or whoever) with a guaranteed smash hit release. New technology leads to new creativity – the opposite of a vicious circle.

So, how exactly does a DSP work, and what can it do? Well, basically, it's a chip specifically designed to handle complex calculations. Most obviously, this can boost the number of things you can do with Mode 7 – the Super Nintendo's celebrated 3D graphic mode, where background images can be stretched, shrunk, expanded, rotated, and generally mucked around with. A normal Super Nintendo can't handle Mode 7 plus a large number of sprites at the same time – with a DSP chip it can, as seen in the stunning *Pilotwings*. Check out the plane and the hang-glider, for instance – these are actually sprites being manipulated in Mode 7, something that it simply wouldn't be possible to do on an unassisted Super Nintendo.

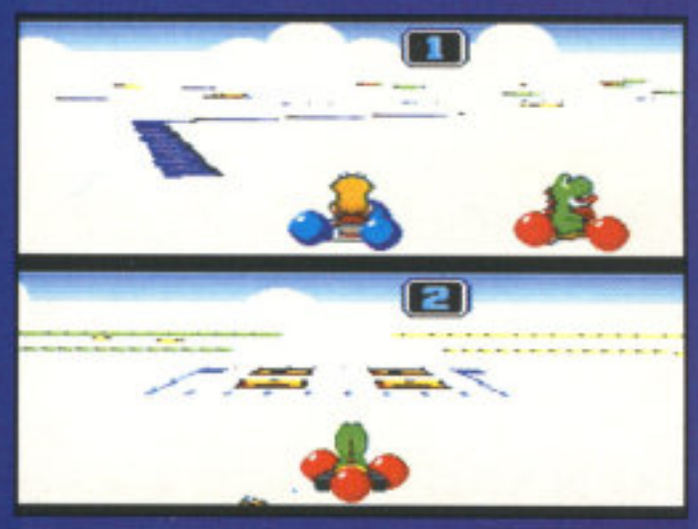
Other ways in which a DSP can prove useful is in combating the sort of slow down that can occur in many Super Nintendo games when there are a lot of sprites on screen. For instance, the fastest the unassisted Super NES's processor can run is 3.58 Mhz – with a DSP you're immediately up into the 7.6-10 Mhz range. Much more healthy.

So what effects can we see that Nintendo's DSP has made possible? Well, as we said, in *Pilotwings*, the smooth side-to-side rotation of the plane and hang-glider, as well as the 3D effect of the spinning rings, are effects the processor along simply couldn't handle – not at the same time as running the detailed 3D landscape backdrop, at any rate. Similarly, on *Super Mario Kart*, the split screen two-player effect could only have been managed with a DSP chip. (This isn't actually the same chip as in *Pilotwings*, by the way, but a similar one.) Recent release *Dungeon Master* from JVC, too, uses a DSP – the first to be adopted by a third-party developer. This one isn't used so much to handle the graphics, as keep a track of all the characters and monsters a game like *Dungeon Master* features.

SUPER MARIO KART, AND NINTENDO'S DSP CHIP

The more familiar, 'normal' DSP chip, as used (in various versions) in things like *Pilotwings* and *Super Mario Kart*, isn't as flashy in what is does as the Super FX chip, but it's equally essential to creating stunning games. In something like *Mario Kart*, for instance, the DSP chip allows not only the smooth operation of two Mode 7 gameplay windows for the two-player mode, but many of the complex calculations required to keep track of where everything actually *is*.

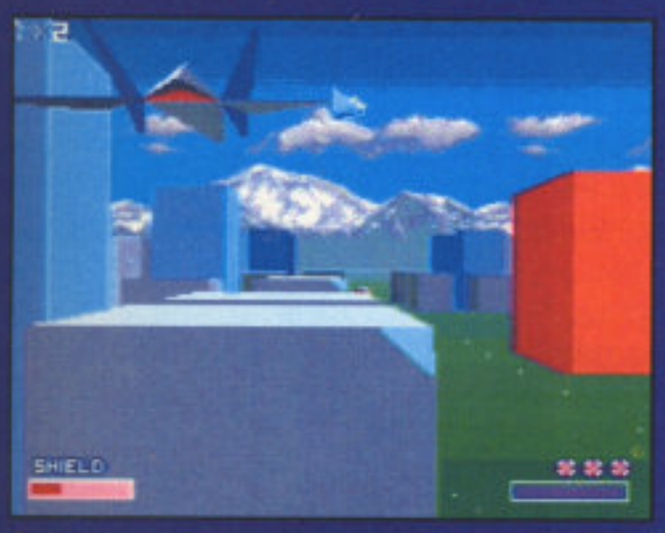
As with *Pilotwings*, standard Super Nintendo features – particularly Mode 7 – handle much of what's impressivve about *Super Mario Kart*, but not *all*.



In fact, the DSP helps out the machine's natural abilities a fair bit. Remember, this is – amazingly – only a 4 Mbit cartridge we're talking here.

The other thing the DSP chip helps happen, besides having the two windows running at once, is simply speeding everything up. There's no slow-down here!

We've looked at the two-player bits in the last three screenshots, but here's the one-player version – and we suspect it doesn't need the DSP at all, as such.



Perhaps the most impressive bits, though, in many ways, are those where you're skimming over a planet's surface, this one being covered by a city.

The Seta DSP chip

One of the most recent uses of a DSP we've seen is on *Exhaust Heat 2* from Seta, though this actually uses a completely new chip developed by the software house itself, and not based on Nintendo's original at all. To be honest, playing *Exhaust Heat 2* it's quite hard to see what the DSP does at all – there's no two player mode, and while the cars do move rather more smoothly than in the original *F1 Exhaust Heat*, things still aren't spectacular. It remains a bit of a mystery, then, quite what this DSP does – perhaps we'll see a more spectacular usage of it in due course. After all, it is reputed to be a very well designed piece of hardware – perhaps better than Nintendo's. Indeed, Seta themselves claim it's twice as fast!

The Super FX chip

Nintendo's Super FX chip, the latest and best known game-enhancement chip, is only used in one game so far – *Starfox/Starwing* – and is designed to do one specific job. That is, to make solid 3D graphics – of the type seen to such great effect in hundreds of home computer flight sims, and in such an embarrassing fashion in the Super Nintendo's own *Race Drivin'* – practical and possible on the machine. It has been designed for Nintendo, along with the first game to use it, by British-based 3D specialists Argonaut. Argonaut are known to be working on a number of as yet unfinished Super FX equipped 3D projects for Nintendo – a driving game is strongly rumoured – while Elite, too, are said to be using the chip. However, its high cost – higher than that of a normal DSP – may put other developers off the Super FX.

Actually, saying the Super FX has been designed only to be useable with 3D graphics may be doing it a bit of a disservice. The chip, which was over two years in development, also allows for texture mapping, and sprite scaling and rotation, coming close to the standards of the latest arcade machines. For details of what it is proven to do – as shown in the great 3D shoot-'em-up *Starwing* – see page 58.

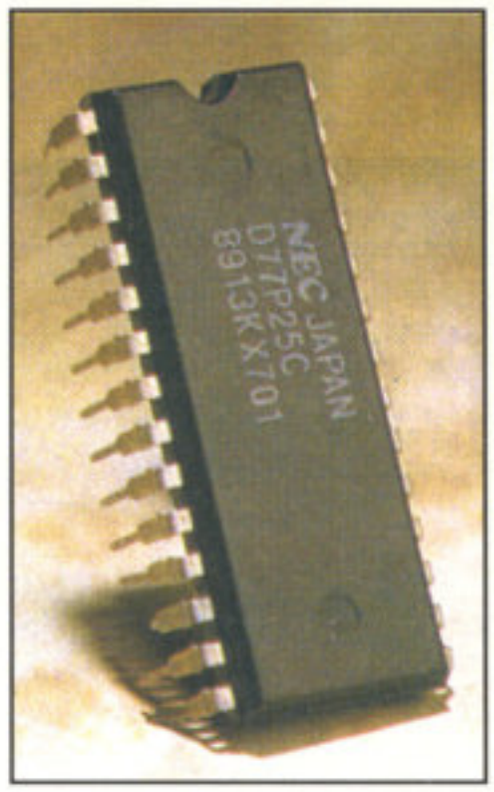
And into the future?

In the medium to long term, of course, the future lies in Super Nintendo CD games (see page 18) – the CD system is to be launched in Japan during the first half of '94, and should make it over here during that year too, at which point we really will be talking a whole new ball game. Until that time, however, expect to see adventurous software houses – and certainly Nintendo themselves – pushing what's possible with the standard machine yet further, using (of course) chip-enhanced games. It's likely that this new generation of games won't arrive in massive numbers, but they will be there.

Also, and we're back with CD again for a second, expect some of the technology proved in cartridge-mounted game enhancement chips to surface in the CD hardware itself. Certainly, a version of the Super FX chip is expected to be incorporated into the CD unit, though neither Nintendo or developers Argonaut have specifically said as such. One thing is certain, however – the games that your SNES can run, and the capabilities of the hardware, look certain to get better.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ACTUAL CHIP ITSELF?

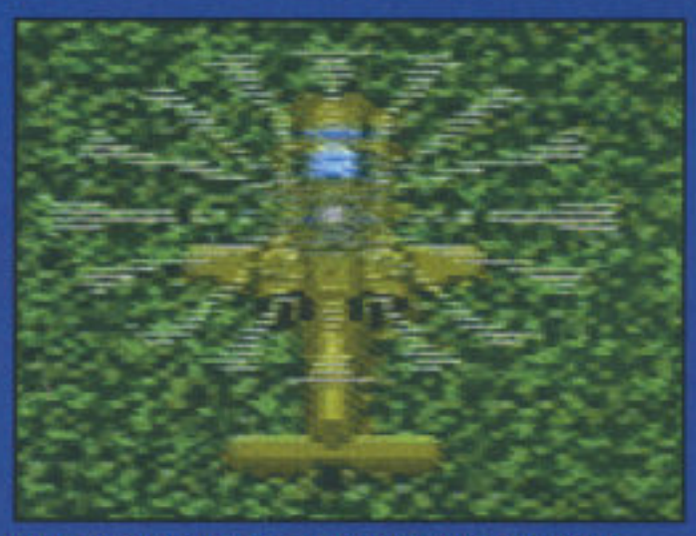
That admittdly-not-very-spectacular looking lump of metal and plastic over on the right there is yer actual DSP chip in all its glory. It may not look like much (chips never do) but it manages some very special stuff. DSP, of course, stands for Digital Signal Processor, and is designed to basically handle complicated calculations – this can be for 3D graphics, or to boost the abilities of Mode 7, but the extra processing power can also be used in other ways. Complicated RPGs or strategy games could use the extra power, for instance, as could complex board games like Japanese chess. The Super Nintendo's notoriously slow processor just couldn't cope with these sorts of thing at an acceptable speed otherwise, and a DSP would be needed, despite the fact that no flashy graphics are actually appearing.



PILOTWINGS, THE FIRST CHIP-ENHANCED GAME

For proof, if every any were needed, that Nintendo intended to use DSP chips to enhance Super Nintendo games from the word go, just check out *Pilotwings*. This was, after all, one of the first two games released for the Super Famicom in Japan, and so must have been in development alongside the machine. That a game of this type would need more than the Super NES hardware could provide was something they knew, but were prepared to work around...

So, what's so clever about *Pilotwings*? Surely that big, swirling, but – unmistakably flat – background landscape is simply Mode 7 doing its stuff?



Well, yes it is – this is a Mode 7 showcase game, alright, the very first one. However, the way the sprites relate to the landscape is rather special.

Each little sprite – and we don't just mean the planes, parachutists and the like, but also stuff like the spinning target rings – complicate things terribly.

The problem is clear: Mode 7 background, plus complicated sprite handling and rotation equals overloaded processor. The answer's spelt D-S-P.

WHAT NEXT?

Money burning a hole in your pocket? Then here're a few things you might consider buying your Super Nintendo...

Now you've got your Super Nintendo you'll probably find there are a few things about it that... well, saying you're unhappy with them would be too strong, but they could certainly be better. Well, take heart. You've obviously not the only one who's ever felt that way – the hundreds of aftermarket add-ons for the machine out there prove that. But what's worth saving up for, and what's, in all honesty, a complete waste of money? *Super Play Gold* investigates...

Even the most stubborn of games won't need this many adaptors to make it work!

Adaptors

The first add-on for most Super Nintendo owners – and something we tend to think of as almost an essential now – is a good Universal Adaptor. These are cheap – most of them come in at around the £15 mark – and incredibly useful, seeing as they allow you to play the latest imported games from America and Japan on your UK Super Nintendo. But which sort of adaptor is best? Let's take a look, shall we?

Bridge Adaptors

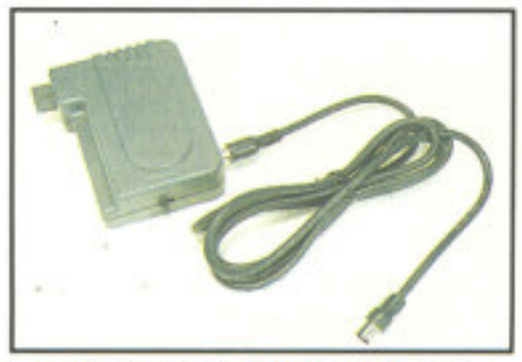
These are the simplest sort of adaptor available – and aren't of any use if you're trying to run foreign games on a UK machine, as all they allow for is running Jap games on an American SNES, and vice versa, without any of that snapping-of-plastic-tabs business. Incredibly simple in design, all they do is raise the cartridge above the cart slot to prevent the problems caused by the fact that US and Jap cartridges (though idential internally) are different shapes on the outside. We can safely say no more about them.

SCART lead

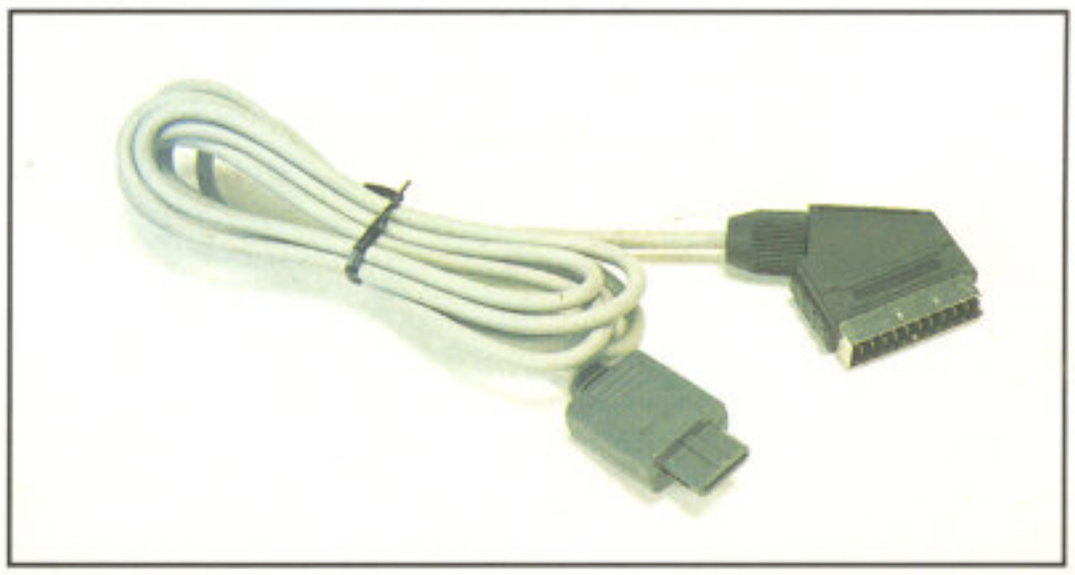
Check if the back of your TV has a 21-pin SCART socket at the back – many modern ones do. If so, a few pounds paid for a SCART lead from any electrical shop could be money well spent – connecting your UK Super Nintendo up to the TV through this instead of the aerial cable will give you a slightly better quality of picture and sound. Of course, if you *do* have a SCART TV, it may well have been that buying an imported US machine would have been a better bet for you – that way you could enjoy your games will the full-sized picture and 17% faster speed unavailable to UK SNES owners...

PAL Boosters

Of course, it could be that you have the opposite problem – an imported Super



PAL Boosters allow NTSC machines to run on normal UK PAL TVs.



SCART leads do the same job, but this time the foreign machine is connected through a SCART port on the back of the TV (make sure yours has one!), not the aerial socket.

UNIVERSAL ADAPTORS

Now these are the ticket – they let you play any game on any machine (that's where the 'universal' bit comes from). What the adaptor does is fit into your cart slot instead of the cart you want to play. You then plug the foreign cart you want to play on top of it, and any UK cart into the slot on the back of it. Super Nintendoes are incredibly stupid, and you've now effectively fooled the machine – it will read the game from the top cart, but the security chip from the one on the back, thus allowing the game to run. (All SNES games include security chips which will only allow the cart to run on the type of machine it was designed for – normally, that is.) As long as you're sensible (and don't pull the adaptor out of the cart slot with the SNES still switched on or anything) you won't damage your games or your machine, and are thus guaranteed a much wider range of game playing opportunities.

So which make of adaptor is best?

Here at *Super Play* we've tried most of the adaptors on the market, and though all do their job, some are better made than others. When buying an adaptor, check what games it will work with. Most older models can't cope with DSP equipped games like *Pilotwings* or *Super Mario Kart*, while most of the recent ones can. Check with your supplier that the adaptor you pick will work with all the latest games before you buy.

Datel Universal Adaptor (£14.99, or check out page 98!)
Tel: (0782) 744707

Using the same casing as Datel's Action Replay cartridge, this well made cart looks good, worked with all the games we've tried it with, and is fairly solid. A good buy.

Honey Bee Super-Magic Converter (Around £15)
Tel: (081) 677 5113

Very heavy and solid, and of a design and colour that matches the Super Nintendo perfectly, this is proving to be a popular adaptor in the *Super Play* office.

Universal Game Converter (£19.99)
Tel: (081) 470 4313

Expensive, maybe, but made of very heavy plastic, this has the advantage of an eject mechanism, so you can pop games out of it without removing the adaptor from your SNES at all. Nice.

The Super Scope light gun comes with a six-game cart, though you can buy another one for it if you so wish.

The Game Genie (American version shown) is generally slicker in presentation than the Action Replay.

Famicom or US Super Nintendo, but no SCART TV, so no way to connect it up. In which case, you'll want a PAL Booster, which allows imported NTSC (60 Hz) machines to run on normal UK PAL TVs through the aerial socket. These are expensive though (the one in the pic cost £24.99 for the Jap model, and an extra fiver for the American one) so there's little demand. May we humbly suggest you take a deep breath and buy a new, SCART compatible, telly instead?

Super Scope

This is, of course, one of the most common add-ons, and one of the few actually made and endorsed by Nintendo. What you get is the Scope – a well made and accurate, if a bit heavy and clumsy – light gun, plus a cartridge with six *Duck Shoot*-style games on it.

The problem is the Scope's not cheap (£60), most of the games are very samey, it makes you arm hurt holding it, and the only game that's been released for it since launch (*Battleclash*) really isn't much cop either. Unfortunately, we can only recommend the Scope if you really, really like *Op Wolf*-style games.

Super Nintendo Mouse

Now this is a weird one – potentially very useful, but as yet only available if you buy the £59.99 *Mario Paint* package (it comes included in the price). While a mouse isn't of much use for most action-orientated Super Nintendo things, it's just the job for RPGs, flight sims, and oddities like *Populous* – though, as yet, only a few of these on SNES are actually mouse compatible. Rumour has it the SNES mouse will become a stand-alone item in time, and, if enough software developers include use of it as an option, could easily become a must-buy.

Hornby Super Deck

Still got loads of old NES games knocking around that you like to play from time to time? Then you'll want this – the Super Deck, a new add-on that allows you to play NES carts on your Super NES! The Super Deck costs around £35, making it cheaper than even the rock bottom prices the NES is now going for, and allows you to take advantage of the cheap prices of many very playable NES games – some come for as little as £15.

Action Replay & Game Genie

Now these are neat, and, for many people, the most important add-on of all, right up there with a Universal Adaptor. Basically, they both do the same job – slot into

The mouse comes with *Mario Paint* only, but would prove useful for other games.

The Action Replay cartridge looks (and works) like a Universal Adaptor, as well as allowing you to change the rules in your games. You can make up your own with the cart's special trainer mode.

The Hornby Super Deck lets you play NES games on your Super Nintendo, allowing you to get into all those great old games.

your cart port like an adaptor would, but allow you to break into and modify the games you are playing – chiefly to give yourself extra lives, an infinite supply of smart bombs or skip levels. You need never get stuck on a game again!

The way these two models work, however, is slightly different. Datel's Action Replay looks like a Universal Adaptor and, once you plug it in, presents you with a special 'code screen' – enter eight-digit codes onto it and you'll be able to modify the parametres of the game. You can look for these codes in print, or ring the helpline. Alternatively you can try to find your own, with a bit of trial and error.

The Game Genie is similar, but you can't find you own codes – you have to rely on those its makers print. However, it can come up with interesting, slightly weirder codes that the Action Replay can't match. We like 'em both!

The Super Multitap

Not officially available in this country yet, the Super Multitap from Hudsonsoft allows up to four to play the same game at once. At the moment only one game on release in the UK is compatible with the system, but we can't wait for more!

The Super Multitap is perhaps the best SNES add-on of all – play it and see!

JOYSTICKS AND JOYPADS: THE SUPER PLAY CHOICE

Finally, there are the joysticks and joypads. Now, for most purposes we find the standards SNES pad quite a dinky, useful little affair – well shaped, nice to hold, reasonable accurate and packed with buttons. That, however, hasn't been enough to get the aftermarket boys stuck into the SNES controller market big time, with everything from super-expensive arcade-style 'sticks – designed to reproduce the coin-op experience of something like *SFII* as closely as possible – to simple joypad things with extra features like autofire attached. It's worth shopping around and, if possible, trying any new joystick or pad before you buy – they are, after all, a very personal thing. That said, however, here are some we think you should consider...

Capcom Power Stick Fighter (£70)

Designed and made by Capcom with *Street Fighter II* firmly in mind, this is expensive, all right, but undeniably a slick, good looking item. Unfortunately, it's also a bit too flimsy, we feel, in construction – we'd certainly look at alternatives like the Apollo or QJ Top Fighter before splashing out.

XE-1 SFC by Denpa Simbunsha (Around £80)

Another big, flash, high tech thing, this does even more than the Power Stick or Apollo Pro, and we like it a lot. It's even more expensive however, and it's hard to work out how to use its intricacies (instructions only come in Japanese).

Nigel Mansell Freewheel by Logic 3

This, on the other hand, is designed for driving games almost exclusively – a sort of steering wheel affair that you sort of wobble about a bit in mid air. Suprisingly, it works! Not on sale yet, but should be by the end of the Summer.

Apollo Pro Joystick (Around £60)

Similar in size and specifications to the Capcom model, this doesn't look quite so nice, but feels tougher. You pays yer money and takes yer choice.

Turbo Touch 360 (£20)

The clever thing about this is the touch sensitive pad bit – you just move your thumb in the direction you want to go, rather than actually push anything as such. It takes some getting used to and proves hopeless for, for instance, driving games (the centre is a bit of a dead area, and the rim around the edge gets irritating), but it *is* great for the special moves on *SFII*.

Quickjoy SN Pro Pad (£16.99)

A transparent, well-made copy of the standard pad, adding rapid fire and slow motion features. The buttons are a bit clicky, however, and the standard pad feels better.

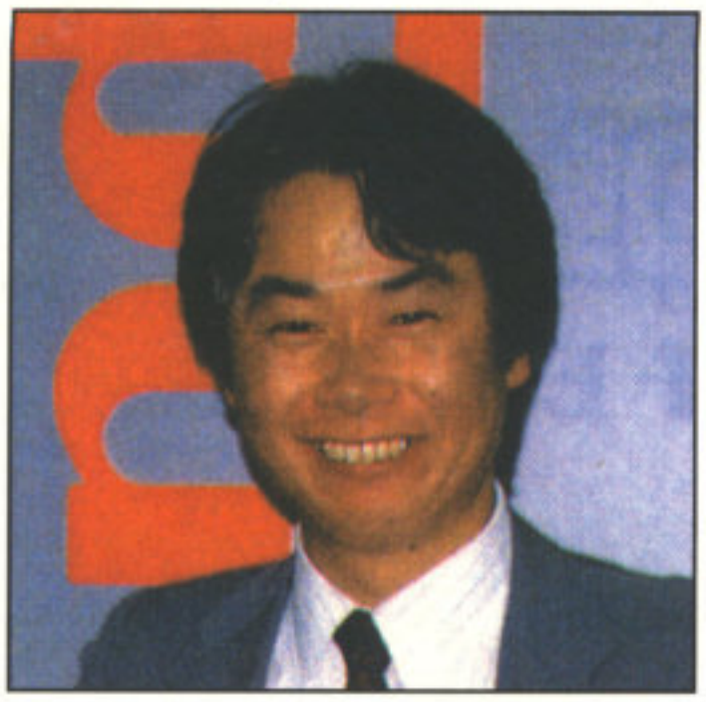
AND THAT'S NOT ALL! WE'VE ALSO SEEN...

Ascii Super Advantage (Around £65)
Very good looking (it matches the styling of the UK Super Nintendo perfectly) this is one of the best feeling sticks of all – nice, light and precise. Highly recommended.

QJ Top Fighter (£69.99, or see offer on page 98!)
Flash, packed with features and very solid (almost industrial strength), this joystick won't break quickly, that's for sure. Performs very well, and a good buy.

Hori Fighting Stick (Around £70)
This looks terrible – very tacky, almost like it's been home made – but its ultra-tough steel construction can't be faulted, nor can (happily) its feel. Perfect for *SFII* et al.

Despite its widespread acceptance in some media (music, for example), the cheap, easy to manufacture CD has had a less-than-easy ride becoming an accepted part of the high tech computer and video game scene. Certainly, Commodore (with CDTV) and Philips (with CD-I) have had a hard time convincing anybody that they really need one of their CD-based machines in their home, while the terrible quality of most of Sega's Mega CD software has given the medium a less-than-spectacular start on consoles too.



Miyamoto San, one of Nintendo's top game designers, and sure to be already working on CD based games.

WHY HAVE NINTENDO DELAYED SO LONG?

Nintendo, as anyone familiar with the company would probably have guessed, have held fire in this arena for the time being – they had no fear of being second into the 16-bit console market, and they have no fear of being second into CD either. Nintendo would rather soldier on with older technology (though, of course, you couldn't by any stretch of the imagination call the Super Nintendo 'old') until they feel the market is mature enough to take a new system in great numbers – in the meantime relying on the quality of their games to see them through. Nintendo expect the whole CD market, and that includes the Mega CD, to occupy a bit of a sales backwater until at least Christmas '93, by which time their own system – plus a good selection (and this is the important bit) of top quality software – will be ready to pounce. And if it's not ready by early '94, than that's fine too – Nintendo have gone on record as saying that if suitable games aren't ready, then the system simply won't be released. It's a lesson Sega could do well to learn a thing or two from.

Much as Nintendo would like to keep quiet and have you believe otherwise, the delay with Nintendo CD isn't just down to a marketing decision. In fact, there have been sizeable problems with the new machine's birth process too – a lot of which have to do with the sheer speed of technological development in this market. For one thing, on launch the Mega CD turned out to be actually a more sophisticated and expensive piece of kit than Nintendo had anticipated – leading to an upgrade to the Super NES system becoming essential. After all, if you are going to be second in the market, you simply have to be the best.

Another reason for the upgrade was the eventual capability of the Super FX chip, which boosted the standard Super NES machine's capabilities to standards approaching those which the CD could boast. The answer to this question – and perhaps the single most important thing about the Super NES CD – was to boost the CD's processing capabilities by increasing it to 32, not 16, bit. By simply doing that, we're suddenly talking new generation technology.

Even that's not the fiull story, however. Last, but by no means least,

CD ROM: The future of the Super Nintendo

It's inevitable – but don't worry about it. Nintendo's CD system is coming, and it is – for the forseeable future – going to be the cutting edge of affordable game technology. However, that doesn't mean your Super Nintendo is about to be made redundant. Far from it, in fact – Nintendo's CD player, just like Sega's (the Mega CD), is an add-on that will attach to your existing machine. It just means that, as well as cart games, your SNES will also be able to load much bigger, and hopefully more spectacular, software from CD too. And in theory, it shouldn't just be better, it should be cheaper too – after all, CDs cost a lot less to manufacture than disks. There's no guarantee this price drop will happen, of course (indeed, it's very unlikely, as we'll explain later on) but with luck we'll have the best of both worlds...

An existing CD ROM system, this one intended for use with IBM PC compatibles. Nintendo's CDs will probably come mounted in little cartridge-style cases, which are likely to themselves come equipped with added RAM.

new delays were created by a serious amount of corporate politics. The original CD ROM development team was set up jointly with electronics giant Sony, but when this fell apart Nintendo approached Philips instead. This went on for a bit, but again ended unsuccessfully, with Nintendo finishing up going back to Sony again. The project currently remains a joint venture, therefore, in development terms at least. What remains less clear, however, is whether Sony are still planning on building their own version of the resulting system – to have been called the 'Sony Play Station' – to sell alongside the Super Nintendo CD in stores across the world. Possibly they aren't – in press releases and conferences the two parties seem unable to decide. It seems we'll be able to expect even more in the way of political wrangling before this thing comes out...

ALL YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SNES CD...

According to the latest information released to *Super Play*, the system's custom 32-bit RISC chip co-processor (possibly related to the Super FX RISC chip) will be mounted into a system cartridge, to be plugged into the Super Nintendo's cartridge slot while the CD unit is in use. This, recently dubbed the SCCP (Super Famicom CD ROM system Co-processor), will act as the 'brain' of the unit. Custom hardware supports it – including a very fast NEC V810 chip, which clocks in at over 21 Mhz – hopefully reducing disk access times (one of the big problems with existing CD ROM systems) to a bare minimum. The new set-up is said to be 'roughly twice as powerful' as a normal SNES running a Super FX chip enhanced game.

Also confirmed is that Super Nintendo CD disks won't be 'naked' CDs, as you play in your home stereo, but mounted in

Think *Starfox/Starwing* is impressive? Then wait until you see the sort of 3D stuff that'll be cropping up on SNES CD ROM! *Starfox* creators Argonaut are said to be one of the teams already developing games for the system.

individual cartridges. This will a) make them more expensive to manufacture (and thus to buy – bad news), b) make them harder to pirate (good news), and c), mean that large amounts of back up RAM won't need to be included into the CD unit itself, because each disk will come with its own SRAM (Static Random Access Memory) for saving game data incorporated into it. (Remember, a Super Nintendo only has 128K, or 1 Megabit, of RAM, meaning lots more memory, for the reams of CD data to be loaded into, has to be included somewhere.) That said, however, the system cartridge should itself still have around 12 Mbit of available back-up memory on it, to keep things chugging along. This should mean that the actual CD drive unit can be kept as cheap as possible (though game prices will be high – a standard Nintendo tactic), and that the systems shouldn't suffer from the problem of data overloading that trouble both the Mega CD and PC Engine Duo CD system.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Amonst the benefits you can expect are:
1) Massive games. A CD can hold 500 megabytes of information – that's 250 times that of the largest existing SNES carts – making truly gigantic games possible. Much of this is likely to be eaten up by improved graphics data – including lots of (very memory intensive) stop motion video.
2) CD quality sound. Of course.
3) Increased processing power. Games should be much faster than the unassisted Super Nintendo can manage, with slow-down a thing of the past.

As for the release date, well – we've heard all sorts. According to one source, for instance, manufacture is expected to start as early as August or September '93 - though these early units will, of course, go to yet more third party developers, with the machine not actually appearing on the Japanese high street until '94 (and possibly late '94 in the UK's case). The Japanese price is currently expected to be around £150, and as games and Nintendo hardware tend to cost a similar sort of price in Japan as the UK, this is around the figure we can expect to see too. Needless to say, it should be well worth it.

WHAT WILL THE GAMES BE LIKE?

Good software, as we've said so many times already – that's the key. While Nintendo obviously haven't announced what they'll be releasing just yet, a bit of healthy speculation reveals one or two interesting answers. Ocean, for instance, are said to be having their long-term solid 3D development company DiD (the people behind home computer games like *F-19 Retaliator*) develop 3D games for the system, while Psygnosis and *Starwing* creators Argonaut are also likely to be working on similar stuff. Then there's Virgin's *The 7th Guest*, a beautiful interactive adventure, featuring some of the most stunning backdrops ever seen. The PC CD version is stunning – but remember, the Super NES can handle just as many colours.

The landmark PC RPG U*ltima Underworld*, already in development for Mega CD, is a likely contender too, as are a couple of things based on arcade laser disk coin-ops like *Mad Dog McCree*. Storm's *Lawnmower Man II* will arrive on disk too, as will stuff from Namco, Bandai, Squaresoft, Imagineer and others. Over in Japan, projects like *Street Fighter III*, *Dragon's Quest VI*, and new instalments of *Mario* and *Zelda* are much rumoured too.

WHAT'S IT GOING TO LOOK LIKE?

This is, of course, one of the big questions – and one that nobody's managed to answer as yet. Nintendo are keeping very tight-lipped about the whole thing, as is their wont, but that hasn't stopped artists by the dozen from trying to come up with their own interpretation. After all, there's plenty to go on – we know roughly what size the unit will be, we know that it will have to be compatible (both physically and visually) with the existing Super Nintendo, and we have the way Sega combined their Mega Drive/Mega CD to go on too. Here, then, is the current state of thinking on the matter...

A popular design concept has the Super Nintendo sitting on top of the CD ROM unit like so, with the cartridge-mounted CDs slotting into the front there. Neat and compact, we think you'll agree.

And here we have essentially the same design, from a different angle. Looks like the artist has taken a few liberties with the shape of the Super Famicom he's drawn here – they're not that slim!

Erm, yes. The more practical fake-it-yourself approach. This is just a Super Famicom sitting on top of an Apple Mac drive, but it gives you the general idea. After a fashion.

SUPER PLAY TOP FIVES

So, what – in our opinion – really are the best driving games available? Or the best puzzle games? Or (heaven help us!) the best 'underwater bits'? We'll of course have our full reviews, explaining these choices in far more detail, in a moment, but first, here's how current opinion stands...

***Super Mario World*: Best ever platformer.**

Top 5 Platform games
1) Super Mario World
2) Buster Busts Loose
3) The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse
4) Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt
5) Super Castlevania IV

Top 5 Beat-'em-ups
1) Street Fighter II
2) Batman Returns
3) Dead Dance
4) Dragonball Z (Part 2)
5)= Turtles IV
5)= Ranma 1/2

***Axelay*: The best looking game ever?**

Top 5 Game Graphics
1) Axelay
2) The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse
3) Starwing
4) Street Fighter II
5) Buster Busts Loose

Top 5 Driving Games
1) Super Mario Kart (*Of course – Ed.*)
2) Nigel Mansell F1 Challenge
3) Human Grand Prix
4) Exhaust Heat II
50 F-Zero

***Mario Kart*: Fabulous two-player fun!**

Top 5 2-player Games
1) Super Mario Kart
2) Street Fighter II
3) Super Tennis
4) Jimmy Connors' Pro Tennis Tour
5) NHLPA Hockey

Top 5 In-game Music Scores
1) Super Castlevania IV
2) Actraiser
3) Legend Of The Mystical Ninja
4) Super Probotector
5) Super Star Wars

Top RPG: *Zelda: A Link To The Past.*

Top 5 RPGs
1) The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
2) Final Fantasy II
3) Soul Blazer
4) Dragon Quest V
5) Final Fantasy: Mystic Quest

Top 5 Explosions
1) Super Aleste
2) Assault Suits Valken (*That's* Cybernator *in the US – Ed.*)
3) Super Probotector
4) UN Squadron
5) Starwing

***Starfox*: Some of the biggest bangs ever!**

Top 5 Funniest Games
1) Super Mario Kart
2) Bart's Nightmare
3) Buster Busts Loose
4) The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse
5) Dinosaurs

Top 5 Shoot-'em-ups
1) Starwing
2) Assault Suits Valken
3) UN Squadron
4) Super Probotector
5) Super Aleste

Mario: Simply the best game hero ever!

Top 5 Game Characters
1) Mario
2) Chun Li
3) Link
4) Fox McCloud
5) Twinbee

Top 5 Golf Games
1) The IREM Skins Games
2) Pebble Beach Golf Links
3) Hole-in-one Golf
4) Super Birdie Rush
5) Devil's Course

***Lemmings*: Everyone's favourite puzzler.**

Top 5 Puzzle games
1) Lemmings
2) King Arthur's World
3) Super Tetris + Bombliss
4) Krusty's Super Fun House
5) Cosmo Gang: The Puzzle

Top 5 Sidekicks
1) Yoshi
2) Slippy Toad
3) The kids in Dinosaurs
4) The monster in Another World
5) Winbee

PitFighter*: The worst game *ever?

Bottom 5 Worst Games
1) PitFighter
2) George Foreman's KO Boxing
3) Wheel Of Fortune (with Vanna White)
4) Road Riot 4WD
5) D Force

Top 5 Intro Sequences
1) Another World
2) Super Star Wars
3) Starwing
4) Prince Of Persia
5) Gradius III

There's a great intro to *Another World*.

Top 5 Underwater bits
1) Axelay
2) The Addams Family in Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt
3) Bart's Nightmare
4) The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse
5) Super R-Type

Top 5 In-game Shops
1) Legend Of The Mystical Ninja
2) The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
3) UN Squadron
4) Gods
5) Cool World

Great shops abound in *Mystical Ninja*.

There are much cheaper magazines.

Some have posters. Or stickers.

Some review every game good, bad or average.

Some are easy to get hold of, any time: they never sell out.

Edge isn't like that.

To be honest, **Edge** isn't for everyone.

Edge: decide for yourself.

EDGE
Thursday 19 August 1993.

SUPER PLAY REVIEWS

SUPER PLAY SCORES

All scored are in percentages – ie out of (of course) 100. Being fairly tight with our marks, nothing, so far, has made it over 94 – and we don't expect many games to manage it in the forseeable future, either. Individual marks are given for graphics (the look of a game), sound, gameplay (the most important mark – this is how well thought out and executed the actual game beyond all the surface gloss is) and gamelife (the higher the mark, the longer the game will last you). Finally we have an overall mark (this isn't, by the way, an average of all the others – gameplay is obviously more important than sound, for instance). Simple, huh?

Okay, welcome to the meat, if you will, of this special magazine – reviews to every Super Nintendo game on official release in this country so far! If anyone ever tells you that the Sega Mega Drive is better because there are more games available for it, just show them this – yes, there *are* more Mega Drive games out there (though not more good ones – Nintendo have a far tighter quality control policy than Sega), but the Super NES is catching up fast. We make it 84 of the things on general sale in shops up and down Britain right now, with more on the way all the time – the number is likely to push through the 100 by the end of the Summer! And remember, including import games, your choice goes right up through 300. (See the feature on page 89 for more on this.)

Every UK Super Nintendo game covered!

SUPER PLAY REVIEWS: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Before we kick straight into the reviews, though, there's just time for a bit of explanation. For a start, the box at the top of each review. This lists each game's full name, the publisher of the game and its developer. Now, sometimes this is the same company, and sometimes it ain't. If the same company put a game together as publishes it in the UK, we put 'in-house' under the developer bit. However, often a company will pay an outside development team to create a game for them – this is the case with, say, *Starwing*, which was developed as a joint effort between Nintendo's in-house people and British programming team Argonaut. Alternatively, a game that was published by another company abroad may have been bought by Nintendo or someone else for UK release – *Super Soccer* is a prime example. Here it goes out under the Nintendo banner, but in Japan it's actually known as *Super Formation Soccer*, and published by Human. Thus 'Human' appears in the developer category in that review.

Price should be obvious. This is, of course, the recommended retail price in this country, though remember – sometimes individual games are to be found selling cheaper than this on special offer. Players, again, should be easy to work out – generally (*very* generally) speaking, a game with a two-player simultanous option is going to be more fun than a simple one-player game. Certainly, the 'gamelife' (we'll explain that in a minute) is going to be longer – your likely to keep playing something like *Super Tennis* with your mates long fter even the best one-player shoot-'em-up has been consigned to the back shelf.

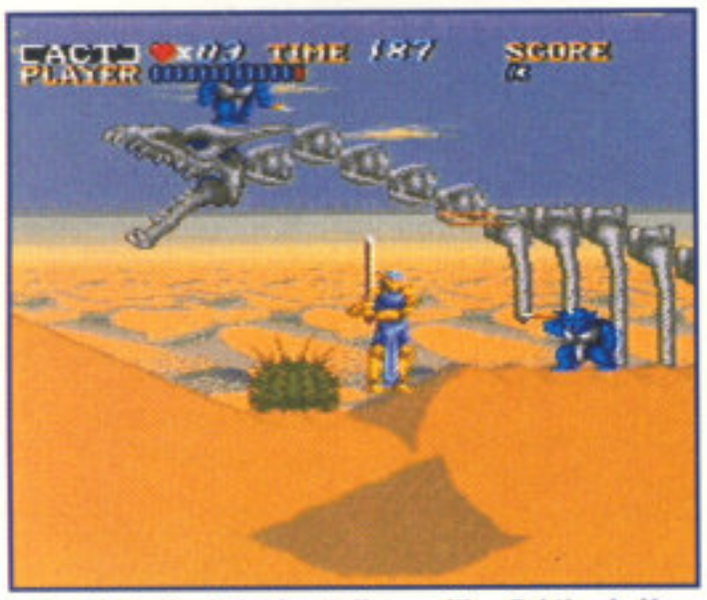
Finally, and the cause of most confusion, there's Cart ROM. The storage capacity of Super Nintendo cartridges is measured in megabits (Mbit) – one megabit being a million bits. A 'megabit' shouldn't be confused with a 'megabyte' – it takes eight megabits to make a megabyte, so it's obviously going to confuse matters if you say *Final Fight* (an average sized game, at 8 megabits) is 'eight meg' (it's really 'one meg'). Got it? The biggest Super Nintendo games, like *Street Fighter II*, are 16 Mbit, many older ones are only 4 Mbit, but, as we say, the average is now around 8. (BB, by the way, stands for Battery Back Up. Switch off a normal cart, and all your hard work – like how far you got in the game – is lost. If your cart has BB, however, it can save your high scores and game position for another day. Very useful, especially on massive games like *Super Mario World*.) And that's it – now get in there and enjoy the reviews

ACTRAISER

UK Release

Game: Actraiser
Publisher: Quintets
Developer: In-house
Price: £49.99
Players: 1/2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Actraiser is odd in that it's actually two games. On the one hand it's a platform-based slash-'em-up, and on the other it's a strategy simulation type thing where you've got to keep the population of a land happy by providing everything they need.



Part of *Actraiser*'s horizontally-scrolling fighting half – this dominates the game, though the RPG stuff is still an important gameplay element.

Both parts work really well. The slash-'em-up bit sees you wandering around lots of attractively-designed levels taking on a wide range of baddies with your extra-large sword. And the strategy side, while taking quite a simple approach, is amusing enough, and features some nice spinny-roundy Mode 7 graphics.

While both sides of the game could cheerfully be sold as standalone products in their own rights, they fit together snugly into something very special indeed. This novel approach, along with some eye-catching graphics and what's probably the best music on the SNES (check out that sound rating!), makes for a game that'll last you for ages.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90%	95%	89%
GAMELIFE 91%	OVERALL SCORE:	90%

VERDICT: An odd game – half hack-and-slash, half RPG – but it's a combination that works. Great music too.

TOP OF THE SNES POPS

The music in *Actraiser* really is good stuff – all orchestral sounding, with a nice organ bit. It was written by Japan's top game musician, Yuzo Koshiro, and was voted just about the best on the SNES in a recent *Super Play* poll. It's games like this that have improved the status of in-game music in recent years – slowly but surely, more and more people have starting to realise that good music is an important – nay, integral – element of any good game, particularly as far as generating atmosphere is concerned. To this end, Japanese shops now sell special CDs of game music - some recorded by top orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra! – for (ahem) 'home listening pleasure'.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

UK Release

Game: The Addams Family
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Software Toolworks
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Ocean's original *Addams Family* is a fine game, and one of the top things they'd done at the time it first came out – one American mag apparently voted it one of the best Super NES platform games ever. With hindsight this is a bit strong, but that doesn't stop this being a fine release – bright graphics, smart parallax scrolling backgrounds, lots of very tricky bits, and a gameplay style that comes across as a slightly more intense (but less ginormous) version of the *Mario* games make for a very sexy game indeed. You can argue over the virtues of the structure – you can play *Addams* in pretty much any order you like, which is good if you get stuck (you can just wander off and try another bit), but means the game lacks that 'I wonder what comes next?' quality of some rivals – but you can't deny it's good. And very clever too. (The same team was behind the second *Addams Family* game – reviewed opposite.)

The *Addams Family* graphics can get a bit dark at times, but they're generally moody and effective. You control Gomez, the head of the family (central in this shot) on a mission to rescue his kidnapped loved ones.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	80%	71%
GAMELIFE 79%	OVERALL SCORE:	82%

VERDICT: A top quality platform game – it's big, and tricky enough to last too.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY: SOLVED! (WELL, ALMOST)

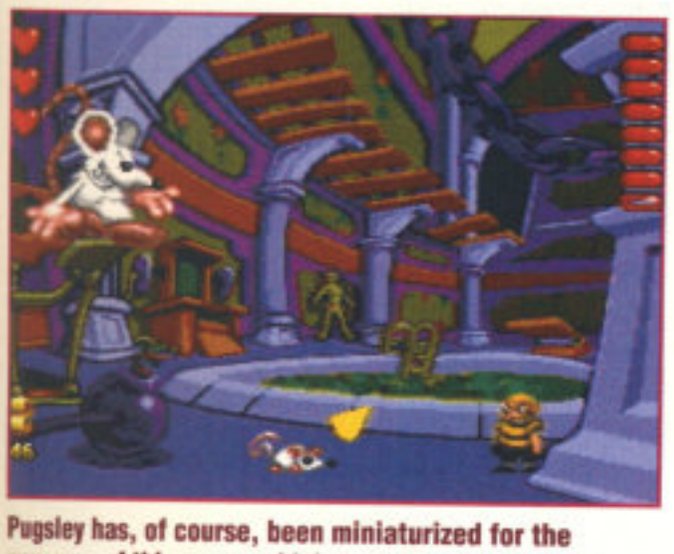
This being a fairly tough game, a few cheat codes are bound to be handy:
B&1&B
This gives you five hearts, 80 lives, and Granny and Pugsley rescued
71117
Even better, this gives 100 lives(!), four hearts and a sword.
W111W
This is good for 100 lives, four hearts and a sword.
21112
Would you believe 100 lives, five hearts and a sword? It's true!

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

IN: PUGSLEY'S SCAVENGER HUNT

UK Release

Game: Pugsleys Scavenger Hunt
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit



Pugsley has, of course, been miniaturized for the purposes of this game, which means normally harmless household objects and animals become dangerous foes!

This particularly-lovely level is presented within a giant crystal-ball affair – a novel and inventive touch. It features one bit that had us stuck for *ages*...

If you enjoyed the first *Addams Family* game, you'll be elevated into euphoric delirium by the sequel – it's even better still!

Improvements are in evidence everywhere you look. The graphics, for example, are surely the best in any platform game on the Super Nintendo. They're just as slick as the first game's, but are far more adventurous, with glowing colours and some truly brilliant backgrounds. They're much more cartoon-like, too (possibly reflecting the fact that the game's based on a cartoon, rather than a film) with all the wacky animation that entails.

As regards the game itself, it's going to take you an awful long time to finish. The original was no walk in the park, but *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* really is very difficult indeed, with puzzle-solving ability occasionally called for as well as good platform hopping skills.

It's big, too, with plenty of very individual stages, each divided up into lots of smaller levels. Pugsley has been miniaturized for the purposes of this game, you see, which means normally harmless household objects become major obstacles to be crossed and coped with. The bathroom is a maze of toilet-chain platforms, soap-covered basins and giant aftershave bottles, for instance, while Uncle Fester's laboratory is an assault course of Bunsen burners and van der Graaff generators. (Unfortunately, a wide range of – very cute – baddies have been shrunk down in size too, making progress tricky every step of the way.)

Still, at least the way the game's been laid out – you can tackle the first four stages in any order you wish – means that if you get stuck on one bit for too long you can always try another section instead. It's thought like this that makes *Pugsley* a very friendly game to play, as well as a challenging one.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94%	90%	90%
GAMELIFE 90%	OVERALL SCORE:	90%

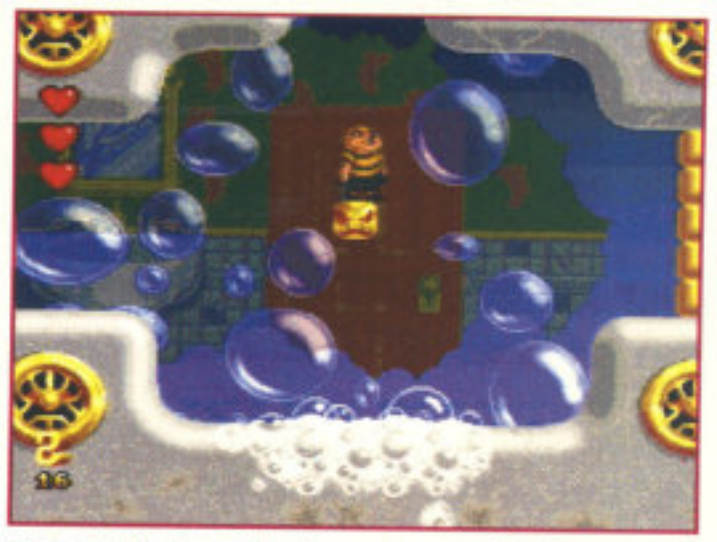
VERDICT: One of the best looking platformers available on the Super Nintendo – and with the playability to match too. Frustratingly hard at times.

So how do we rate it? Well, although *Super Mario World* remains the Super Nintendo's very best platform game, even now, *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt* really isn't far behind. And as nearly everyone with a Super NES has *SMW* by now, this would be a sensible next move. Needless to say, it comes highly recommended.

'INTERESTING' HEROES

Sonic the Hedgehog is (arguably) responsible of course. Ever since the spiky blue fellow was launched as a direct answer to Mario – complete with a whole range of cute expressions and animations designed to endear him to just about anyone within visual range – game designers on every system have gone hell-for-leather to come up with just about the most interesting sprite yet. Pugsley is a prime example – he has an incredibly wide range of animated moves, plus he likes to munch on marmalade sandwiches when he gets bored (ie, when you leave him standing around for more than a few moments). We rather shudder at the thought of the sort of thing some future game hero might be asked to do to top this...

As you can see, the second *Addams* game is sometimes a little dark too, but this looks worse in the screenshots than when you're actually playing it. (Promise.)



The graphics throughout are gorgeous, but these giant, quivering bubbles in the bathroom level just have to be amongst the best. Don't they look great?

ANOTHER WORLD

UK Release

Game: Another World
Publisher: Interplay
Developer: In-house/Delphine
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

A genuine Amiga and PC classic, and the game that really cemented the reputation of French developer Delphine, *Another World* is remarkable in a number of ways. First, and most obvious, is the way it looks – it's hard to think of anything else you can compare it to, save perhaps *Prince Of Persia*. Quite simply, the game boasts the most brilliantly life-like animation you're likely to get to see on the SNES – videotape of a real person's running action has been closely copied to give a very 'real' feel to the game. The graphics that surround this centrepiece are good and moody and fitting too (if a bit dark) – in short, it looks glorious.

The game does have one fault, of course – the sheer look of the thing eats up memory like nobody's business, so it's all a bit short and easy to complete. Still, if you ever fancied being a human scientist transported to a hostile alien world, and being forced to fight your way back against a horde of eight foot alien monsters (as you might), this is the game for you. Some neat visual puzzles keep the interest level high too, and the music is very moody, almost like a film score.

Ugh! Get off! Get off! Our hero *isn't*, as you might be thinking, treading in doggie doos here, but having his foot attacked by some particularly vicious slugs.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89%	92%	81%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
81%		81%

VERDICT: Great to look at, undeniably very inventive, and, yes, film-like in execution, *Another World* is a true classic. Too short and easy though.

AND IF YOU LIKED ANOTHER WORLD...

...you'll love *Flashback*, its sequel, but set in a futuristic world packed with aliens (rather than simply an alien one). With more complex gameplay than *Another World*, it's just been released on Sega Mega Drive and Amiga to a brilliant reception. Quite whether it'll arrive on the Super Nintendo, though, has yet to be made clear...

BATTLE CLASH

UK Release

Game: Battle Clash
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

A typically Nintendo low price for this, the first – and so far, only – game released in the UK for the Super Scope light gun (outside of the six-cart pack that comes with it, of course). It is, you'll be pleased to read, two or three steps on from that original batch – the graphics (all giant robots and other monsters in the *Ultraman* mould, just itching to be blown away) are a vast improvement for a start, with all sorts of interesting stuff going on in the background. Unfortunately, however – and it's a built-in fault of light gun games – all you get to do is shoot things, and that ain't enough to keep the interest up. Worse, you only get to shoot one thing at any one time. Still, it's quite neat the way you need to keep switching between defensive and offensive shooting all the time, and (as we said) the graphics are fine. If you really, *really* like your Super Scope, *Battleclash* is a good (indeed, your only) buy, but for the rest of us it's really only of novelty value.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	70%	56%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
35%		48%

VERDICT: Oh dear. The Super Scope light gun has not had a good start, and this – the first stand-alone game to be released for it – is scarcely better. Rumour has it the Japanese are to start designing for it now though, so things should improve.

Whooo! Watch it – this is one of the meaner looking baddies you get to face off against in *Battle Clash*. It's all much more attractive than earlier light gun games.

THE WORST SUPER SCOPE GAME OF ALL TIME

Though none of the original pack of six Super Scope games were exactly *good* (the best earned a generous 49% in Super Play 3), *Blastris A* is definitely the worst – a crap version of *Tetris* where, instead of twizzling the falling blocks to fit, you shoot bits off them instead. It's very silly, and very, very dull.

Half the levels are this sort of detailed, slow-down-free horizontal stuff...

...and half are vertically scrolling like so, showing the curvature of the earth.

Yikes! This great ED-209-style thing is one of the best bosses we've ever seen.

Giant metal spider crops up fairly early in the game, and proves hard to kill.

AXELAY

Japanese/UK Release

Game: Axelay
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami in-house
Price: £44.99
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Every so often a shoot-'em-up comes along and breaths real life into this not-most-innovative of genres. It can do it by being incredibly hard, perhaps, or by being based on an ultra-successful arcade original, or by being packed with innovative gameplay features – or by simply looking fabulous. It's this last route that *Axelay* takes. It isn't massively long, sure, and it isn't particularly hard, but its graphics are to die for. This is one of those games you simply *have* to have, if only to wave under the noses of Mega Drive owners, as if to say, beat that if you can.

So what graphic tricks does it pull? Well, to start with, it alternates viewpoints from level to level. The odd numbered levels, starting with the first one, feature an unusual vertically scrolling Mode 7 perspective, with the horizon curving away from you in imitation of the curvature of the earth. It gives the game an amazing – and unique – look all on its own, but Konami have taken things a step further, using it as a hook to hang further unusual gameplay elements on. Thus, level one features a sea of giant floating rocks to negotiate, many of which you can shoot out of your way, while level three sets up a maze of floating metal pipes – shoot the gold sections out of these and they tumble earth-wards, allowing you to nip through the resulting gap. Level five, on the other hand – where you're flying over a fiery sea – features giant *Dune*-like sandworm creatures rearing up out of the lava, which you've got to avoid.

Then there are the more normal-looking horizontally-scrolling levels. When you first see the game these look like weak sisters compared to the spectacular Mode 7 levels, but once you start really playing you realise this ain't necessarily the case – they are, if anything, even more playable. You see, your smaller space ship sprite is given more room to move about the screen, while an array of clever gameplay elements seem to be there more to make the game challenging, and less for their 'oh wow' factor.

Both viewpoints share one thing, however – some of the best looking end-of-level bosses seen in quite some time. Level one's giant robotic spider sets the tone nicely, but it's level two's giant ED 209-alike, level three's spinning witch's-hat affair, and level five's giant fire-monster that really get the adrenalin a-flowing. Couple these with brilliant minor baddies throughout the game – many of which are so original, we're hard pushed to think of anything to compare them with at all – and an almost complete lack of slow-down, and you'd think you'd have the perfect game, right?

Right. And then again, wrong. You see, *Axelay* is great as far as it goes, but consisting, as it does, of only six short (though admittedly perfectly formed) levels, you can't help wondering how long it's going to take you to complete it. A must-have game as far as impressing your friends is concerned, then, but perhaps no great shakes in the lastability department. (But then what shoot-'em-up is?) Great though the game is, you can't help wondering if maybe you'd be better off borrowing, rather than buying, it?

Axelay features some very nifty intro and presentation screens, this one showing your space ship, and allowing you to add weapons etc to it.

This giant fire-boss is one of the nicest end-of-level creatures in this or any game. He rises up out of the flames and takes swipes at your ship.

WORLD'S FINEST

Konami, the creators of *Axelay*, have probably been the most consistently high quality software house in the world over the past five years. With releases on the Super Nintendo including *Super Castlevania IV*, *Super Parodius*, *Pop'n Twinbee*, *Tiny Toons* and *Super Probotector*, there's hardly a duffer in the pack – only early titles like *Gradius III* (which suffer from the traditional slow-down, though they're still good games despite that) let the side down at all. Compare this with Konami's nearest rival, Capcom, which – though capable of genius – still puts out games as ropey as *Magic Sword*, and Konami's pre-eminence seems unassailable. Even the games Konami buy-in from outside developers for release on their label are the cream of what's available.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94%	90%	70%
GAMELIFE 70%	OVERALL SCORE:	85%

VERDICT: Glorious looking shoot-'em-up isn't the toughest, but still great stuff.

BEST OF THE BEST

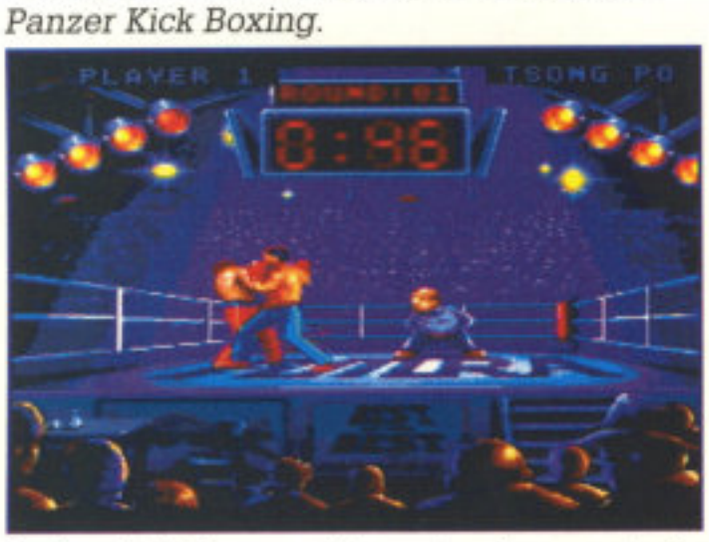
UK Release

Game: Best Of The Best Championship Karate
Publisher: Electro Brain
Developer: Loriciel
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
71%	61%	58%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
40%		50%

VERDICT: Hardly great – this simulates kick boxing, not karate, and does so in a fairly lacklustre fashion.

Although *Best Of The Best* is subtitled 'Championship Karate', that's actually a bit of a fib. It's really much closer to kick boxing (admittedly a sport along broadly similar lines), the reasons for which become immediately apparent when you realise that it's actually a conversion of an old Amiga game called *Panzer Kick Boxing*.



Here's an in-fight screen – the small sprites are actually fairly far away from you (it's like watching from the back of the audience). Cute ref though.

And, if the truth be told, it plays kick boxing very well. The animation's good, and there are loads and loads of moves, along with a cunning feature whereby you can choose a selection of them and assign them to the various positions on the joypad. There are a few quite complex training bits, too.

But once you start playing it, the game's all-too-limited nature becomes horribly apparent. You're just doing the same thing with the same characters over and over again against an unvarying background, and that soon gets boring – unlike *SFII* and its imitators, the structure of the game makes it hard for *Best Of The Best* to offer you an assortment of interesting background stages. There are niggly little flaws, too, which are mostly revealed when the two players are standing next to each other and can't hit each other properly. How silly.

Fairly good up to a point, then – the two player matches are sort of fun, in a weedy sort of a way – but there are about 20 better beat-'em-ups available on the system. Then, of course, there's *Street Fighter II*, which is *infinitely* superior. And infinitely is not a word we tend to bandy about lightly.

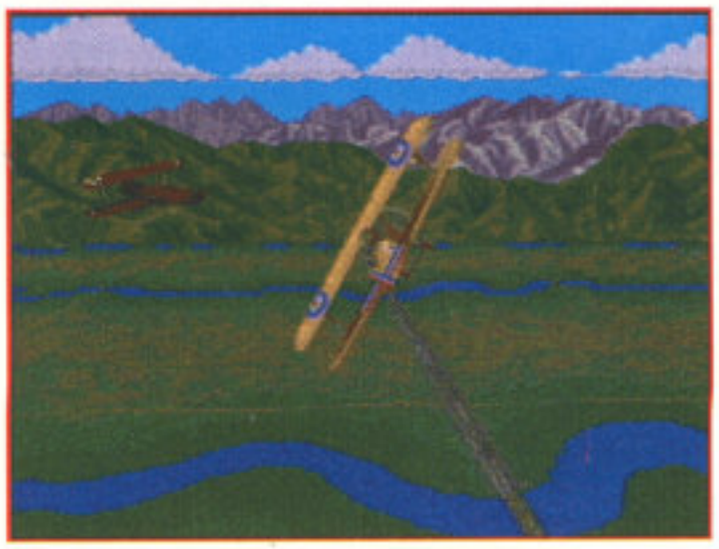
Pick a boxer, any boxer. (Notice how even this in-game screen doesn't think these guys are karate fighters.) There's a limited range of options to choose too.

BLAZING SKIES

UK Release

Game: Blazing Skies
Publisher: Namco
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Those with long memories will remember this being reviewed under its American name, *Wings II*, in an early issue of *Super Play*. It's rather like a World War 1 version of *Pilotwings*, if you can imagine that, with its whizzy Mode 7 landscape and short, snappy missions, the missions separated into overhead view bombing runs, and much more exciting 3D dog-fights. There's no taking off or landing to worry about, and the terrain all looks very samey, but happily the flying itself is spot on – atmospheric, enjoyable seat-of-the-pants stuff, and all set to some fairly exciting music too. This is more of an arcade game than the flight sim it might look like, but it's all very exciting as far as it goes. Perhaps not quite in the same league as *Pilotwings*, but not bad.



Top dogfighting action in *Blazing Skies* – these battles are real seat-of-the-pants stuff, and great fun. Nice mountains add depth to the flat Mode 7 landscape too.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83%	70%	80%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
66%		71%

VERDICT: Not a genuine flight sim, but an original shoot-'em-up. Great for *Pilotwings* fans who want more guns.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Blazing Skies neatly illustrates something that can be quite a problem for Super Nintendo owners – identifying games when they often have different names in different markets. *Blazing Skies*, for instance, is known as *Wings II* in America and *Sky Mission* in Japan. The reasons for these name changes? Well, sometimes they're to avoid confusion with other products (as in the *Starfox* to *Starwing* swap), and sometimes they're because a name simply doesn't mean anything in one country – but with things like this, goodness knows. Maybe we'll let you know when we manage to work it out...

BUSTER BUSTS LOOSE

UK Release

Game: Buster Busts Loose
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Price: £49.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Now this is brilliant. Fabulous. Wonderful. The best. Everything has gone right. And you should buy it. (Is that decisive enough for you?)

Konami are one of those software houses that seem to have the golden touch – all their games are good, but some are just works of genius. *Buster Busts Loose* has on its side wonderful graphics (just look at the screenshots), a lovely feel (for once we've no complaints about the controls at all) and plenty of character. It also has variety coming out of its ears, starting out with a series of (very different to each other) platform levels, but then, half way through, branching out into – an American football section? And then a sort of mad pinball game (with Buster as the ball)? You can't accuse *Buster Busts Loose* of being repetitive, that's for sure.

The heroes of *Buster*, in case you're wondering, are called the Tiny Toons – mini-versions of classic Warner Brothers cartoon characters like Bugs Bunny, Wile E Coyote, Daffy Duck et al. They're cute, alright, and loads of them turn up throughout the game in different roles, some as good guys, some as baddies. Plenty of the main ones host their own little sub-games, which turn up randomly between the main sections of the game – piggy Hampton is in a little tile-pushing affair, for instance, while Furrball (the mini-version of Tweety-Pie hating Sylvester) has a sort of raquet-ball game thing. Though simple, most of these games are good fun in their own right, if not exactly the sort of stuff that really rewards repeated playing.

It's around this time of the review that you're probably expecting the traditional 'the only downside is that it's too easy' bit that undercuts all the good stuff that's gone before. (Don't worry – newcomers, who've not read *Super Play* before, and so won't be familiar with quite how often this tends to crop up, will find out how traditional it is the more they read their way through this special.) But no – contrary to expectations, *Buster Busts Loose* isn't too easy. True, there aren't months of gameplay in here, but some very tricky bits (the sections where you're on top of the train, say), coupled with a fairly mean supply of continues, make it a lot trickier than we expected. It's certainly harder than *Mickeys Magical Quest* and its ilk – and, arguably much more varied too, with the gameplay going through complete changes of style and pace at fairly regular intervals throughout.

A great game, then (as we hope we made abundantly clear in the first paragraph, and since), and highly recommended for anyone who can stomach cute graphics. Only those really put off by the bordering-on-sickly-cuteness of it all won't love the whole thing to death.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92%	92%	90%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	89%
79%		

VERDICT: Simply one of the best looking, most imaginative, and most playable games on the Super Nintendo.

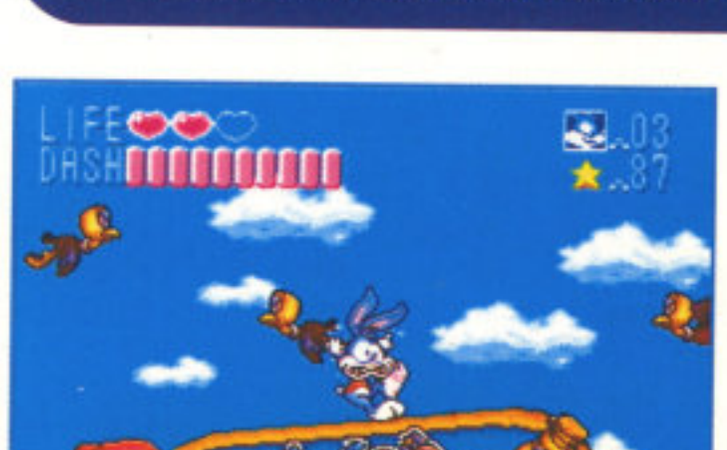
BUSTING BUSTER LOSE, THE EASY WAY

Fancy all the pass codes, so you can take a shot at those levels you haven't managed to fight your way through to yet? Then lucky you – here they are.

Level 1: Plucky Duck/ Babs Bunny/ Frog
Level 2: Road Runner/ Montana Max/ Elmyra
Level 3: Gogo Dodo/ Shirley/ Hampton
Level 4: Frog/ Plucky Duck/ Babs Bunny
Level 5: Gogo Dodo/ Calamity Coyote/ Road Runner
Level 6: hampton/ Plucky Duck/ Frog

Bonus code (this lets you pick the sub-game you want to play on the bonus wheel): Elymra/ Shirley/ Calamite Coyote

Though it doesn't look it here, one of the great things about *Buster* is that it *doesn't* force you to jump blind, hoping there'll be something to land on underneath.



Yikes! One of the best of the generally brilliant, appealing animations is this one where Buster gets hurt, as seen on this very late section of the game.

Watch out for the barrels, Buster! Our floppy-eared hero has trouble making it up the stairs in this nifty Wild West saloon-bar section of the game

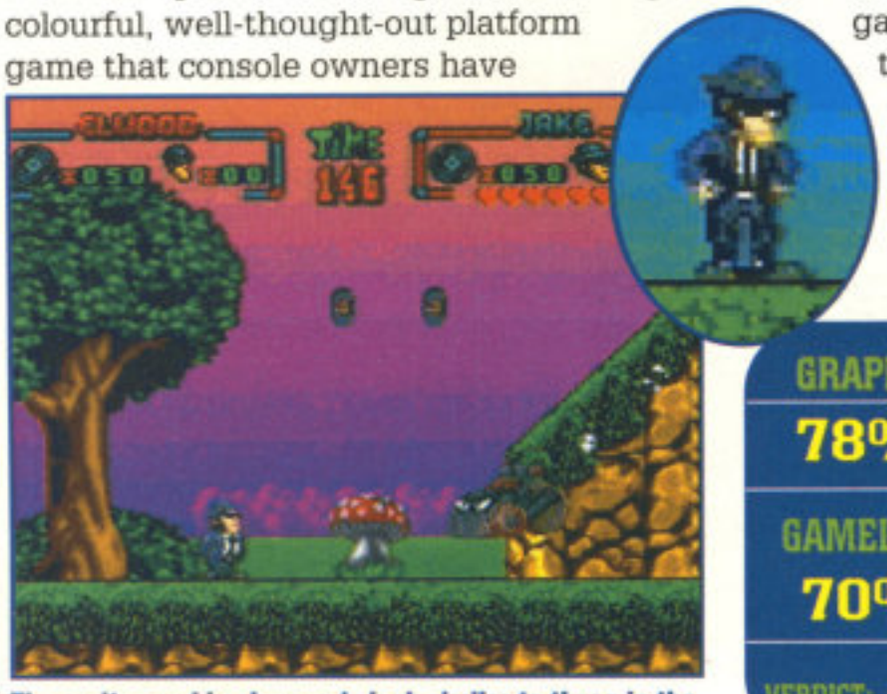
THE BLUES BROTHERS

UK Release

Game: The Blues Brothers
Publisher: Titus
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1/2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Remember the much-lauded *Blues Brothers* on the Amiga? That earned plenty of Brownie points for being the sort of big, colourful, well-thought-out platform game that console owners have become used to, but on the Amiga (and, thus, cheaper). Titus's Super Nintendo version of the same thing, however, really shares only the name – they're both colourful six-way scrolling platform games, they both feature cute, distinctive (and very similar) Blues Bros sprites, but the game design and level layouts are completely different. Obvious changes include the fact that this one features more (but smaller) levels, and allows you to fire things at the baddies (records, which you couldn't do on the Amiga) – similarities include the fact that both games feature a less-than-perfect two-player mode, and have a number of annoying flaws (for instance, baddies reposition themselves frustratingly if you re-enter a screen).

The big difference, however, is that while Amiga *Blues Bros* had the field to itself (more or less), the superior Super NES version has to go up against the likes of *Mickey's Magical Quest*, *Mario* et al – and just ain't quite up to the job.



The sprites and backgrounds look similar to those in the Amiga version, but in terms of level design it's all new.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78%	73%	68%
GAMELIFE 70%	OVERALL SCORE:	68%

VERDICT: Cute, but not stunning.

FILM GAMES ON SNES

So, are film games on the SNES ever any good? Well, they can be – indeed, *The Blues Brothers* is proof of that. However, with the likes of *Home Alone's 1* and *2*, *Toys*, *Wayne's World*, *Cool World*, *Robocop 3* and the *Rocketeer* on the machine, we were starting to wonder – the problem seems to be that (whisper it) most film games are put together by lumbering American companies, seemingly incapable of recognising a good game idea (but not a marketing opportunity) if it jumped right out and hit them. Thank goodness for the likes of the great *Super Star Wars*, *Hook*, and *Addams Family* then, which help balance things a bit. All three were programmed outside of the US, funnily enough...

CHESSMASTER

UK Release

Game: Chessmaster
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: Software Toolworks
Price: £44.99
Players: 1/2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

If you're looking for a chess game for your Super Nintendo, you really haven't got any choice other than to buy this, as it's the only Super Nintendo chess game in the world. It does absolutely everything you'd expect: as well as playing chess against you, it'll also let you take back moves, suggest moves for you, keep a record of the game's progress and solve problems. There are also a few gimmicky features, like the option of switching between a 3D and a 2D view of the board, or swapping the pieces for a couple of weird-looking alternative sets.

And, given that it does all this chess-playing business completely succesfully, why have we given it such a middling mark? It's not that we've got anything against chess programs – admittedly we dion't have much use for them ourselves, but can appreciate that other people do. No, the trouble is that *Chessmaster* makes absolutely no attempt to make itself look in any way appealing. The presentation is really atrocious, and there are some truly harrowing tunes each time you move a piece too.

As a result, this will only appeal to real chess-heads who, to be honest, would be much better off spending the money on a purpose-built chess computer (which would probably be cheaper anyway).

Such is the excitement generated by *Chessmaster* that the board's been invaded by its euphoric fans.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
30%	4%	60%
GAMELIFE 80%	OVERALL SCORE:	55%

VERDICT: Well, it *does* play chess...

PATHETICALLY UNINTERESTING CHESSMASTER FACT

Chessmaster is the only chess game on the Super Nintendo so far. But it says that in the review, and it wasn't very interesting anyway. Sorry.

DESERT STRIKE

UK Release

Game: Desert Strike
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The Mega Drive lost one of its key advantages in the console war when Electronic Arts re-thought their exclusive-to-Sega policy and began publishing Super Nintendo games. To begin with they've simply been porting over their existing Mega Drive back catalogue, and that's how we've ended up with *Desert Strike*. And, seeing as how the original was an absolutely brilliant game, and how Electronic Arts' conversions have by and large been of an extremely high standard, it goes without saying that *Desert Strike* is as essential a purchase on the Super Nintendo as it was on the Mega Drive.

While on the surface the game resembles nothing more than a shoot-'em-up (an excellent one, mind), with you flying around the desert in a helicopter gunship blowing up tanks, armoured cars, soldiers and buildings, there's an awful lot more to it than that.

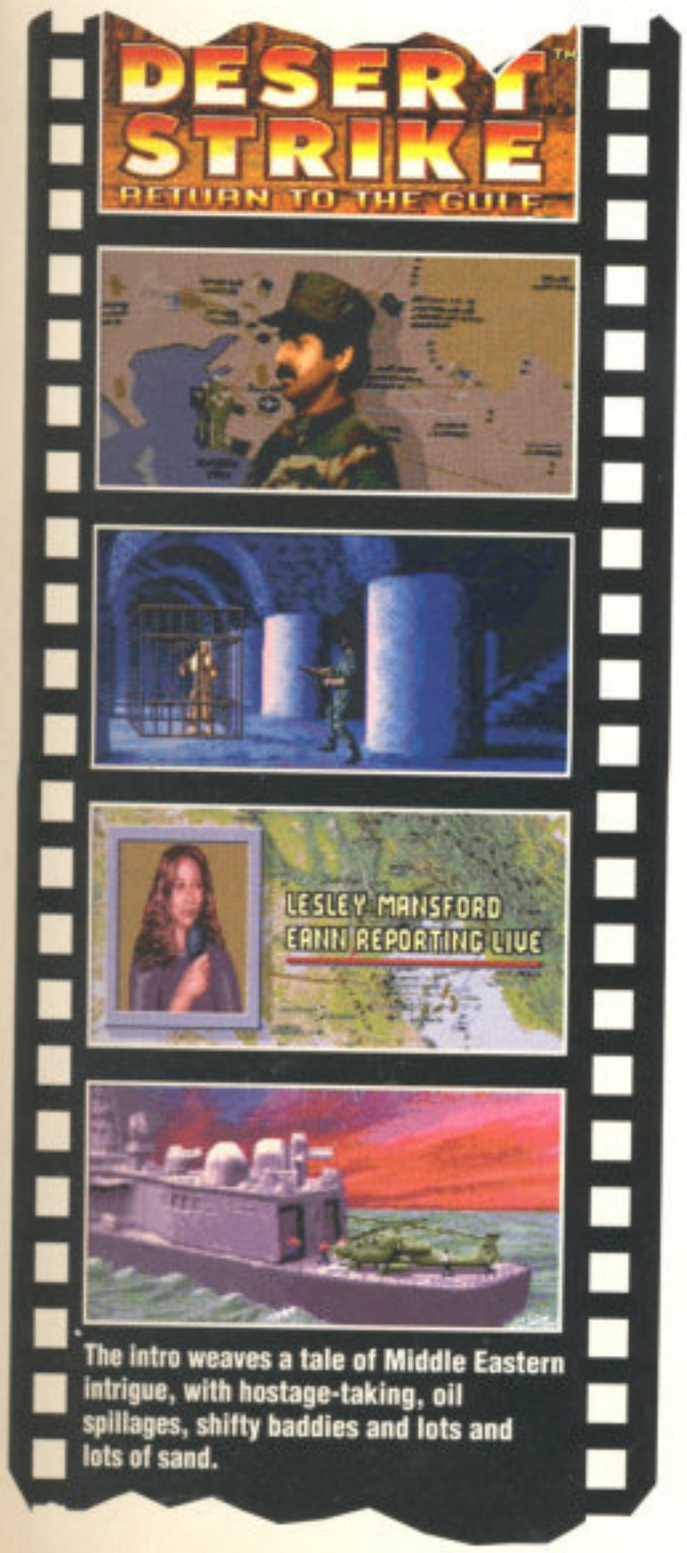
The game's split up into four stages, each taking place over a different scrolling section of desert, and within each of those you've got a series of missions to perform. There are simple ones – blowing up a lightly-defended radar station, for example – and much more complicated ones, like taking out a chemical weapons plant that's crawling with enemy tanks, or attacking a yacht, or picking up a spy from the heart of enemy territory. And as well as worrying about reaching your objectives intact, and what happens when you get there, you've also got to hunt around for extra ammunition, armour and fuel. These are sprinkled around fairly liberally on the first couple of stages, but later on you'll find that there are enough to get you through the missions intact – but only if you ration them carefully.

And it turns out that there's a lot more strategy to succesfully playing *Desert Strike* than you might originally have imagined. The order you do things in is of the utmost importance – have you got enough fuel to hit that power station and reach the nearest base, or is it worth taking a detour and getting a top-up, risking an encounter with an enemy missile launcher?

It's not all plotting and scheming, though. *Desert Strike's* still a shoot-'em-up, and you'll have masses of fun simply flying around blowing things up. The actual helicopter you'll be doing it in has been superbly represented – it moves just like a real one, right down to the way its nose tips down when it moves forwards – and is really easy to control. The scenery looks good, too, although explosions tend to be a little weaker than might be expected from the devastating array of weaponry you've got available. There are only four stages, but the last ones are quite tricky, so it'll last you a while.

There's oil in them, er, dunes. On the fourth (and last) stage, you've got to try and stop the Ira... baddies (hem, hem) from spilling oil all over the place. You've also got to airlift some commandos.

Here our brave heros have parked their helicopter (not very well, admittedly) and are making the most of the sunshine. It's not all killing in the army, you know.



The intro weaves a tale of Middle Eastern intrigue, with hostage-taking, oil spillages, shifty baddies and lots and lots of sand.

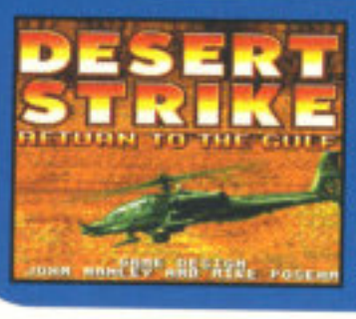
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82%	68%	92%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	90%
88%		

VERDICT: A truly fabulous game which, prejudices notwithstanding, should be just as popular on the Super Nintendo as it was on the Mega Drive. It really hits the nail on the head, and shows that Electronic Arts *can* do it on the Super NES after all.

JUNGLE STRIKE!

There's already a follow-up to *Desert Strike* on its way to us. It's called *Jungle Strike*, it's set in – yes – a jungle, but otherwise looks very similar to the original game, if spruced up a bit. EA are hoping to have it ready in time for Christmas.

CAN'T FINISH DESERT STRIKE? NO PROBLEM!



This is one of the most potent (if slightly useless) cheats of them all – it gets you through to the end of the game, without you actually having to play a single level of it! What happens is this – just type in 99P55LM, and you'll be immediately whisked to the White House lawn for the end of game reward sequence. Pointless but interesting, we think you'll find.

DRAGON'S LAIR

UK Release

Game: Dragons Lair
Publisher: Elite
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

These little(ish), but well-animated, orange snake things pop out of the ground on the first level, whereas...

...this much bigger orange snake-thing is the first end-of-level boss, and a real bast to get past.

Dirk occasionally floats along in a little bubble like this – a nifty, and very cartoon-like, effect.

The story behind this particular game is a complicated one, but here goes. *Dragon's Lair* started life as a coin-op, and one of the first machines ever to use a laser disc to store animated graphical sequences on. The graphics were consequently superb – just like watching a cartoon – and people raved about it. The game's problems began when it was converted to home computer formats, whereupon it quickly became apparent that that's all you were basically doing – watching a cartoon. A game of *Dragon's Lair* consisted of sitting there watching a series of animations, the outcome of which depended on which way you pushed the joystick at various points. This just wasn't on – winning just meant remembering which way to waggle yer 'stick each time. A gameplay-free zone, in other words.

For the Super Nintendo version, however, Elite had a bit of a rethink. They retained the original game's hero (Dirk the Daring) and its plot – Dirk's got to rescue a princess from Singe the Dragon's castle. They also reproduced the 'feel' of the original: although the graphics are much more conventional, they've still got a very cartoony look about them, with just as much atmosphere as the laser disc version had. The big improvement is that there's gameplay aplenty – this looks and plays just like any well produced Super NES platform game, with the added bonus of the distinctive *Dragon's Lair* graphics.

The downside to all this is that Elite have rather gone from one extreme to the other: from a revolutionary laser disc extravaganza to a bog-standard platform game. There's really nothing new here at all – basically Dirk just jumps about from platform to platform, hacking at baddies with his sword and collecting extra bits and pieces. After you've played through a couple of levels you'll know exactly what to expect through the rest of the game – more of the same, jiggled around a bit.

With that said, though, it does play very well. Everything works slickly and accurately, and it's very addictive – you keep getting slightly further with each new attempt. The only real problem (you thought we'd finished with the negative bits, didn't you?) is that the game is too difficult. Dirk hasn't got many spare lives to play with, and they're easily lost. And, although there is a password system, it's a game in itself, and hard to actually use.

Some players, those who're always complaining that games are over too quickly, might see this toughness as an advantage. And, on balance, we'd agree. But it's also hard to escape the feeling that if the game was any easier, people would realise how tiny it actually is.

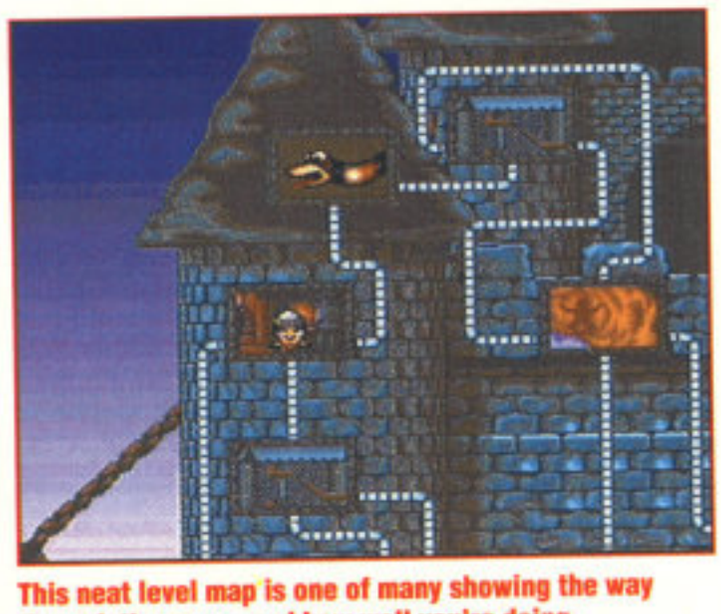
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82%	85%	81%
GAMELIFE 83%	OVERALL SCORE:	82%

VERDICT: A neat, well-designed platform game – that Konami have chosen to piublish it in Japan tells you something about its high quality.

STAGGERING SALES

Elite, *Dragon's Lair*'s publisher, claim to have sold 400,000 copies of the game over the years on home computer formats. And those were the crap laser disc style versions too!

Here's the castle you're meant to be invading, as shown in the pretty (*Aren't these things always 'pretty'? - Ed.*) intro sequence. Time to get stuck in.



This neat level map is one of many showing the way through the game, and how well you're doing. Unfortunately, they also reveal how small it all really is.

CHEAT TO VICTORY!

Lucky Action Replay cart owners will snaffle up these nifty *Dragon's Lair* codes with glee!

7E0F F903	Unlimited shields
7E0F EB02	Unlimited lives
7E0F F605	Infinite time

DRAKKHEN

In Japan, role playing games are by far the most popular genre around, with big releases like the *Dragon Quest* or *Final Fantasy* series comfortably outselling anything else – and that includes the top beat-'em-ups and other action games. Unfortunately, as most are packed with Japanese text (and, anyway, are reputed 'not to translate well'), most Brits have to forego the pleasures of the best Jap RPGs and have to put up with tosh like this instead. Lacking both the cute characters and intricate storylines of the Jap versions, and the the hardcore appeal of top western RPGs of the *Dungeon Master* school (which usually appear on PC and Amiga computers, not consoles, anyway),

And so our team continue their adventure. Last thing we knew, they were trying to find a prince's sister to give her a message.

UK Release

Game: Drakkhen
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: In-house
Price: £49.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Drakkhen falls between two stools. Yes, it boasts a fairly smooth 3D landscape, yes, the spell system is pretty comprehensive, but a lack of strong characters, humour, interesting monster designs and unusual backdrops gives it all a so-so feel. No great shakes, basically – which is a shame, considering it's pretty much got the RPG market all to itself at the moment.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
76%	53%	57%
GAMELIFE 66%	OVERALL SCORE:	64%

VERDICT: Fantasy role-playing games aren't too common on the SNES (not in English, at any rate), and *Drakkhen* is consequently a welcome release. It's not exactly brilliant, though.

WANT MORE RPGS?

If you like the looks of *Drakkhen*, but fancy something harder, you might want to check out the Japanese RPG scene. Over there they're massive – biggest of all is the very popular *Dragon Quest* series, the most recent of which, *Dragon Quest V*, is arguably Japan's most popular game, with bigger queues outside the game shops on its day of release than anything else has ever managed, and that includes *Street Fighter II*! Strangely, the *Dragon Quest* series has only done so-so businesss when translated into English (under the *Dragon Warrior* label), but that's yer cultural differences for you...

EXHAUST HEAT

Exhaust Heat's strength lies in the way it plays. It's just like entering a real Formula One championship: you've got to manage your finances properly, using prize money from races to upgrade your car to give you a better chance of winning next time, and you've got to make sure your car is properly set up for the conditions on each track. The realism is maintained once you're actually out there racing – too many racing games consist of

Here we are racing, although as this is early in the race, the cars haven't separated – later on you'll be lucky if you get two or three cars on screen at once.

you simply driving around with your finger jammed on the accelerator button trying to remember to steer when you get to the corners. But in *Exhaust Heat* you find yourself weaving between cars, desperately looking out for opportunities to overtake, just like in a real race.

But if you're going to really enjoy the game properly you're going to have to put up with some of the most useless graphics ever. Although the road uses Mode 7 and scrolls quite smoothly, the perspective somehow looks all wrong, and can't really see corners coming up as easily as might be desirable. The cars all look terrible, too, as if they haven't got any more than a vague connection with the road.

UK Release

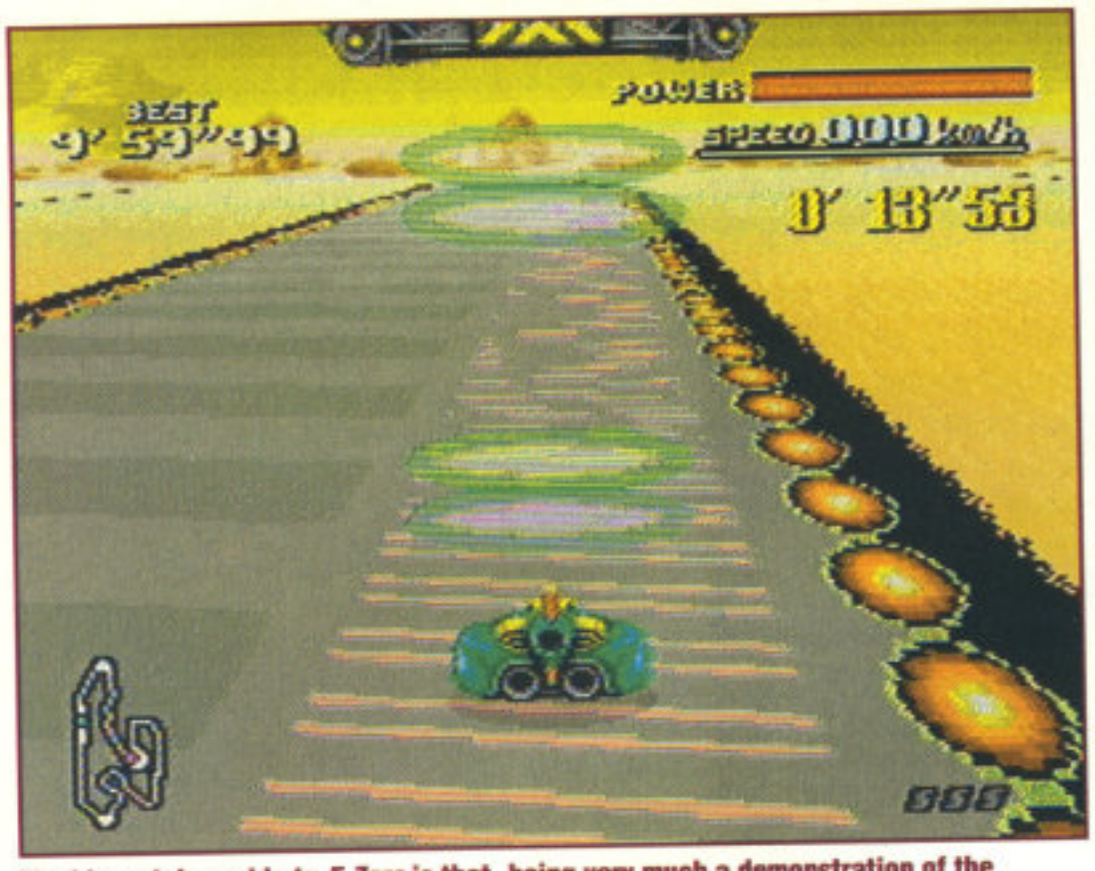
Game: F1 Exhaust Heat
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Seta
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
56%	60%	72%
GAMELIFE 75%	OVERALL SCORE:	69%

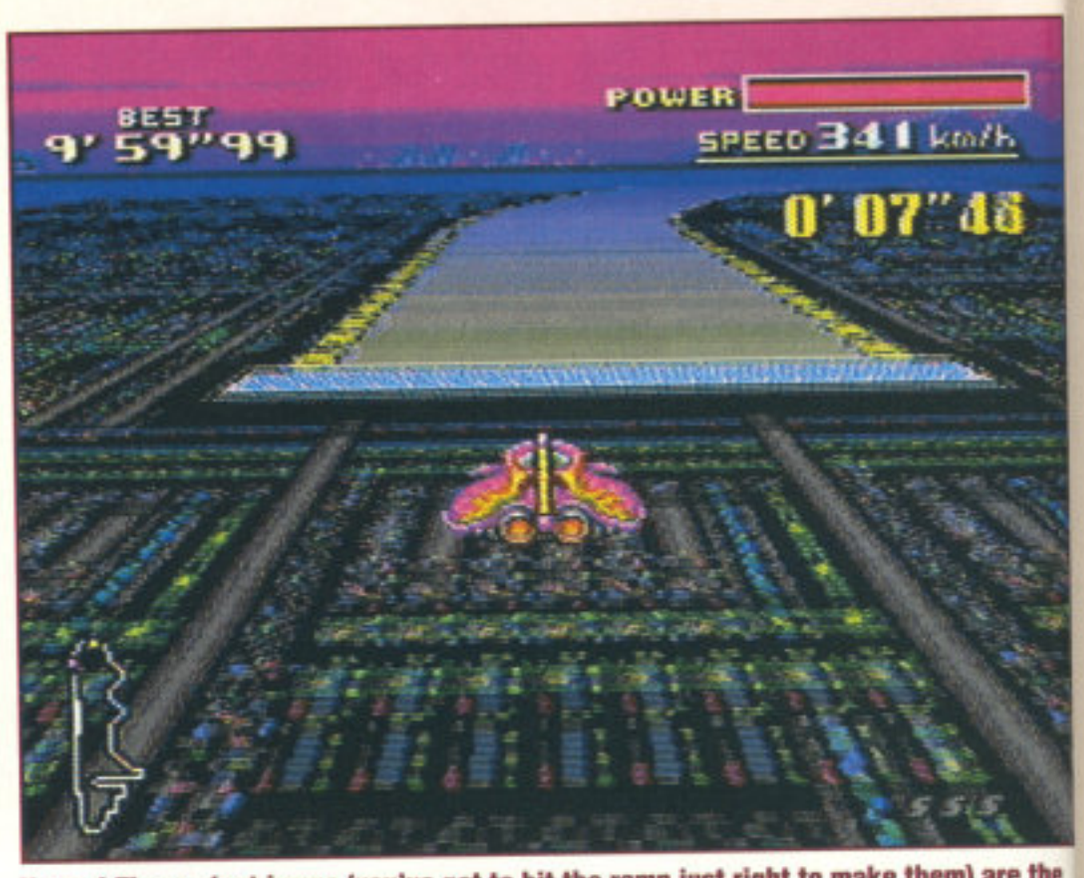
VERDICT: A good driving feel, but some hopeless graphics make this all less-than-brilliant. Think before you buy.

LEFT BEHIND?

Getting left behind in *F-1 Exhaust Heat*? Never fear! There's a sure-fire way to overtake the whole pack! You see, if, while you're racing along, you press and hold the L and R buttons, you'll kick in a turbo booster that'll take you up to 400 kph! Brilliant, or what?



The biggest downside to *F-Zero* is that, being very much a demonstration of the abilities of Mode 7, as well as a game, the landscape is all ever so *flat*.



Yowza! These giant jumps (you've got to hit the ramp just right to make them) are the most distinctive part of the game, throwing you right across the futuristic cityscape!

F-ZERO

UK Release

Game: F-Zero
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

The thing you've got to remember about *F-Zero* is that it was a Super Nintendo showcase game – the first driving game created for the machine, and put together with the specific purpose of making people go 'Wow! How did they do that?' The thing it's showcasing is, of course, Mode 7 – the Super Nintendo's famous background-manipulating graphics mode, and still perhaps the single best thing about the machine. It's a job it does with great aplomb.

The thing about most console (or, indeed, home computer) driving games is that the machine has to spend such a lot of its time making sure the road is scrolling convincingly towards you that it has precious little memory left for anything else. With the Super Nintendo's Mode 7, however, it's very different – all the programmer has to do is tell the machine what the road looks like, and what direction it should be moving in, and the console's custom hardware does the rest. Thus the rolling road in *F-Zero* moves incredibly fast, and incredibly smoothly – you can't fault it there. It's also incredibly flat, which you might find a bit disappointing, but should come as no surprise – Mode 7 can only spin, scroll and manipulate flat objects. What is more of a genuine disappointment, however, is that the programmers – obviously so chuffed with their rolling road, and unused to having any memory left to play with after creating one, have failed to put much else into the game. Thus the courses have few trackside features, and – short of a few good jumps which, if you hit them right, will take you to other parts of the futuristic raceway – the game as a whole has precious little in the way of interesting gameplay elements. Thus the whole thing feels rather empty, if undeniably impressive looking.

Talk about empty! You rarely see other cars in *F-Zero*, giving the whole thing a rather unearthly feel.

Those who keep their eye on the import makret will have noticed that *Exhaust Heat 2*, a new F1 racing game, in many ways looks uncannily similar to *F-Zero*, though the developers are starting to take advantage of the space freed up by Mode 7 to add extra bits to the game. We can't help thinking that things are still moving too slow though – *F-Zero* was great for its time, but now, well over a year on, we should be seeing more and better of Super Nintendo driving games. Mode 7 is great – now the rest of the game has to live up to it.

A FLYING START

Feel the need for a bit of an advantage over your computer-controlled fellow racers in *F-Zero*? Then try these:

- For a mega start, hold down the accelerator before the race starts, then, when you get the green light, drive in front of the nearest opponent. He'll crash into the back of you, and give you a big push!
- If you get a Super Jet on the track Port Town 2, head left after crossing the starting line and you'll come across a jump. Just before you hit it, activate the Super Jet and steer right – you'll fly across to the opposite side of the track.
- Finally, for the real experts, if you complete the King League on Expert level, the game offers you a new challenge – a new Master level which, needless to say, is almost impossibly hard to do!

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82%	70%	80%
GAMELIFE 83%	OVERALL SCORE:	81%

VERDICT: Very fast, very smooth, and a real Mode 7 showcase. Could do with a bit more to the gameplay though.

FINAL FIGHT

Uh-oh! Haggar, the hero of *Final Fight*, takes a fall. The game looks great, but where's the two-player mode?

Beat-'em-ups can be cleanly divided into two categories – one-on-one games like *Street Fighter II*, where you take on opponents one at a time against a static background, and scrolling ones like this. The first sort put all their efforts into the actual 'beating people up' side of things, giving you loads of really complicated moves to play about with, but don't actually give you all that many people to beat up, or different places to do it in. (Sorry – this isn't coming out too much like a lecture, is it? It just seemed like the best way of going about things.) The second sort don't have nearly as many different moves – most of the time you're just punching and kicking – and consequently you don't have to think too hard when you're playing them. They make up for it by throwing loads of baddies at you, and tossing in plenty of scrolling scenery. Lots of people find this approach really boring, but just as many don't.

And, if scrolling beat-'em-ups are your cup of tea, *Final Fight* is about as good an example as you'll get. It is to scrolling beat-'em-ups what *Street Fighter II* is to one-on-one ones. (Significantly, both games are from top publisher Capcom.)

Unusually for this sort of thing, *Final Fight*'s got plenty of variety. The scenery's varied, your opponents vary (rather than simply being clones of the same baddy over and over again) and there's a variety of different weapons to pick up to supplant your fists and feet. It really is a very varied game. The graphics, too, are top quality, especially the bit where you're on an underground train.

In fact, this is about as close a conversion of the orginal arcade game as one could possibly imagine. Except for one big thing. There's no two-player mode – a ridiculous error, and one we can see no reason for. Two-player modes help a lot in scrolling beat-'em-ups, helping to stave off the tedium that even *Final Fight* eventually succumbs to.

UK Release

Game: Final Fight
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £49.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85%	79%	88%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	86%
81%		

VERDICT: Excellent as far as these scrolling beat-'em-up things go, but crucially lacking a two-player mode.

SEQUEL ON THE WAY!

If you bought your copy of *Super Play Gold* as soon as it reached the shops, *Final Fight II* should just have appeared in Japan. It includes a two-player mode, as well as much better graphics, better moves and new characters. Expect a UK release late this Summer!

GEORGE FOREMAN'S KO BOXING

UK Release

Game: George Foreman's KO Boxing
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: In-house
Price: £49.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneous
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

We've seen hopeless one-on-one beat-'em-ups before – indeed, there are plenty covered elsewhere in *Super Play Gold* – but few are quite as useless as this. True, boxing games are almost always crap – all you ever really get to do is jab away at the buttons a lot, more interesting fighting moves (like kicks, jumps, or – yes! – *Street Fighter*-style Fireballs) being of course out of the question.

Unfortunately, this one's even worse than usual, the ridiculous choice of perspective (from just behind one guy's head) allowing for almost no movement (you can just duck from side to side or put a block up, not move your feet), while your choice of blows are limited, and the animation is often distinctly ropey.

Almost unbelievably, considering how bad most boxing games we've seen have been – even the best only give a limited amount of gameplay – this is perhaps the worst of the lot. In a word, rubbish.

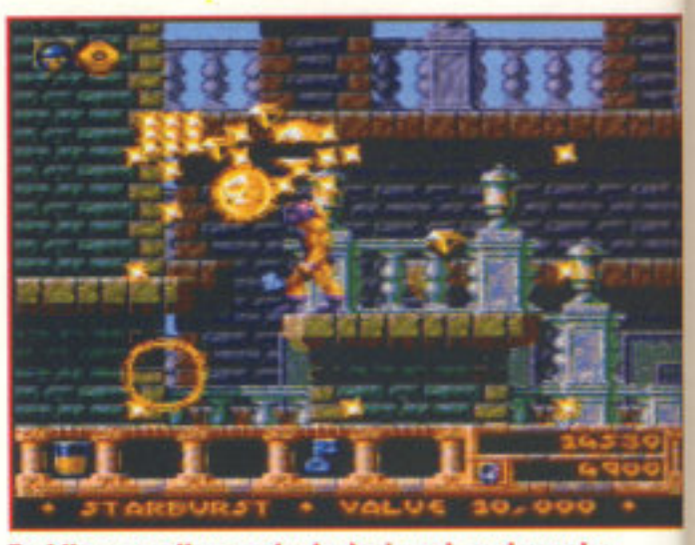
No, you're not seeing things – this stupid behind-one-head viewpoint limits your movement almost completely! Great idea, huh?

Don't you just want to punch his face in? Perhaps the thing *George Foreman* does best is make you truly loath your opponents. This little victory dance is just *so* annoying...

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
30%	38%	15%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	19%
23%		

VERDICT: A truly hopeless boxing game– perhaps the worst thing released into the UK market. Avoid like the plague!

GODS



Baddies are all very nicely designed, and spooky looking. Here one goes up in a burst of sparkles.

UK Release

Game: Gods
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: The Bitmap
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The graphics in *Gods* are very blue and metallic-looking, in typical Bitmap Brothers-style. Our hero is slightly plodding, but not as much as in the Amiga version.

Take one look at *Gods* and you can tell that the Bitmap Brothers have arrived on Super Nintendo. The game features all their trademarks – lush-looking (if rather repetitive) steel-and-stone coloured graphics, a good intro tune (though nowhere near as good as the Amiga original's, funnily enough), gameplay that can be treated either as a simple platform shoot-'em-up or something rather more complicated (plenty of switch pulling and object manipulation can reveal all sorts of secret sub levels and other good stuff that aren't really essential to finishing the game at all, but are jolly good fun to explore anyway), and one of the best shop screens in the business. While this looks almost identical to the Amiga original, the Bitmaps have taken great pains to make their lead character less plodding and slow than he was in his first incarnation too. A good game, with lots to explore.

GODS: THE EASY WAY

Stuck in *Gods*? Finding it all a bit too tough? Then check out these handy codes:
TEMPLE: SD1
LABYRINTH: MGB
UNDERWORLD: BMH

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	79%	68%
GAMELIFE 80%	OVERALL SCORE:	76%

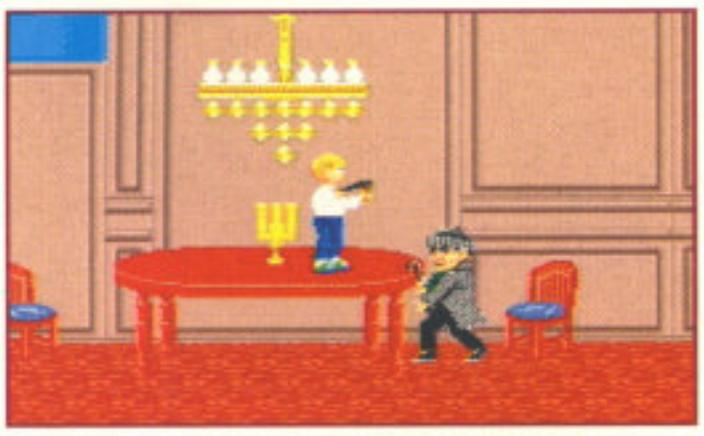
VERDICT: The Bitmap Brothers, the famous Amiga programming team, do a good job on their first SNES platformer.

HOME ALONE

UK Release

Game: Home Alone
Publisher: THQ
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Let's just come out and say it, shall we? *Home Alone* is dreadful. In just about every way. And we're not just saying that because we hate that Culkin brat either. Take the graphics, for instance. They're unbearably naff – loads of horrible wallpaper and carpets, nasty little sprites and the occasional badly-drawn icon to pick up. Suffice to say, they don't display the Super NES's abilities to their best effect. Then there's the gameplay. You, as the incredibly-smug-but-left-behind Kevin, have to safeguard your family home from a bunch of burglars – you do this by collecting various family valuables from around the house and hiding them away somewhere (but as all the valuables are hidden in ridiculous places in the first place – in mid air, but invisible, say – the baddies would never be able to find them anyway) and then dumping them in the cellar. Needless to say, it's boring, unsatisfying stuff, and completely action-free. There may be little point in saying it again, but we'll repeat it anyway – avoid *Home Alone* at all costs.


Look who got himself a horrible woolly hat from granny for Christmas! Graphics are this ropey throughout.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
46%	51%	40%
GAMELIFE 30%	OVERALL SCORE:	34%

VERDICT: Oh dear, oh dear. We hated the film, but this game version is considerably worse. Avoid it, if you know what's good for you.

THE THQ STORY - IT GETS WORSE

Unfortunately, the software house behind *Home Alone*, THQ, has managed to earn itself one of the worst reputations in the business for shoddy product. We've love to say it's not really their fault, but, unfortunately, well, it generally *is*. However, recently much has been made about the company's new commitment to quality, so hopefully things will begin to change...

HOME ALONE 2

UK Release

Game: Home Alone 2
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Imagineering Inc
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Just a page ago we were urging you to avoid the first *Home Alone*, and what have we here but a review of the second one. It's almost the same game (just as the second film was almost the same film as the first one, just writ large), but with the action taken out of a single house and placed in such exiting locations as a hotel, a street, and other New York settings. Our hero is being pursued by hundreds of baddies as he works his way through the various locations, avoiding bad guys and collecting objects as he goes. Very derivative, standard gameplay then, and with flat dull graphics to match, this will win few awards for innovation. It's also incredibly easy to finish – we're really only talking hours from when you first plugged the cartridge in here – with what difficulty there is mainly coming from problems with the controls. It's terrible stuff, all told, and really well worth steering clear of – you'll hate yourself if you don't. And yes, fans of the film should avoid it too.

As you can see, the graphics are probably slightly improved over the first game's, but there ain't much in it. Gameplay is along the same tedious lines too.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
62%	49%	47%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
26%		32%

VERDICT: Oh dear. This is just the same as the first *Home Alone* game, really, only with different settings. Ugh.

JAMES BOND JR

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
32%	28%	28%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
30%		29%

VERDICT: Being a ropey multi-level thing based on a dubious cartoon character, you just *know* you should avoid it.

UK Release

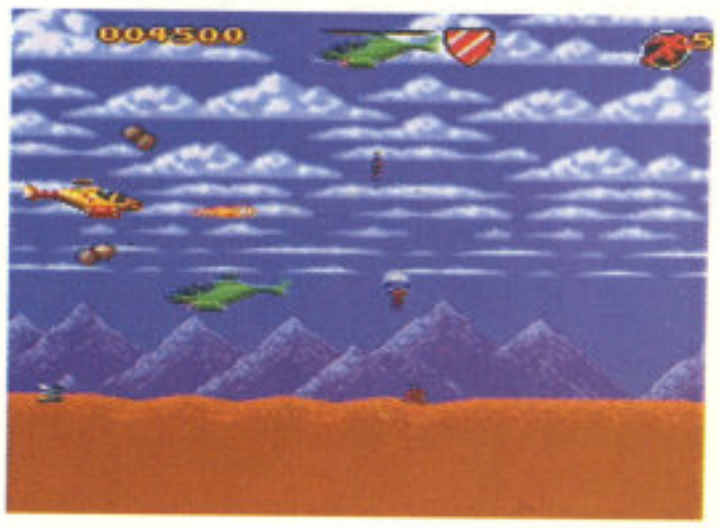
Game: James Bond Jnr
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Grey Matter
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

You may not have heard of *James Bond Jnr*, but it's an American cartoon about the original JB's nephew (or something) and his world-saving adventures while taking time off from an English public school. Thus the game presents us with a sprite who looks more like your 'typical' American high school kid than any sort of secret agent, and sets him in a tedious series of platform and shoot-'em-up sections, none of which do the Super Nintendo any favours whatsoever. You get a helicopter blaster sequence that looks like an Amiga budget game from around 1987, you get a very dull (if slightly prettier) aeroplane shoot-'em-up level, and you get assorted feeble platform sections. It all adds up to nothing very much at all. Ghastly American trash of the first order, with really no redeeming features that we've noticed at all.

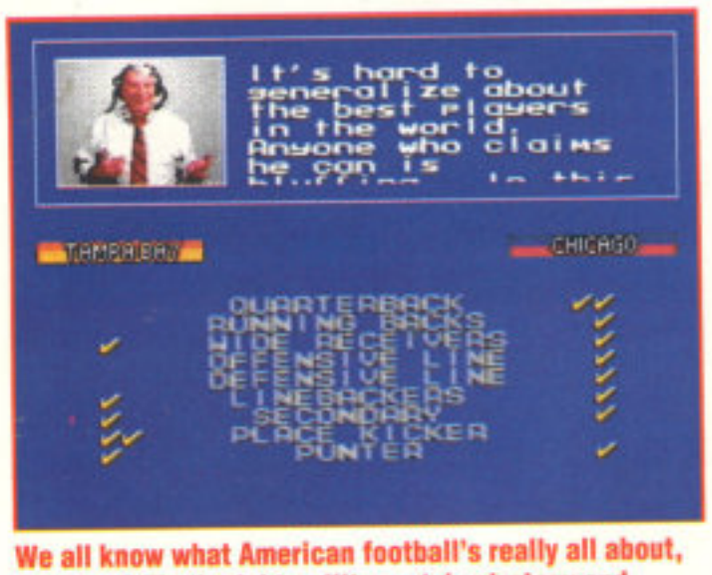
NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY, 007...

...we'll only list these handy level codes once.

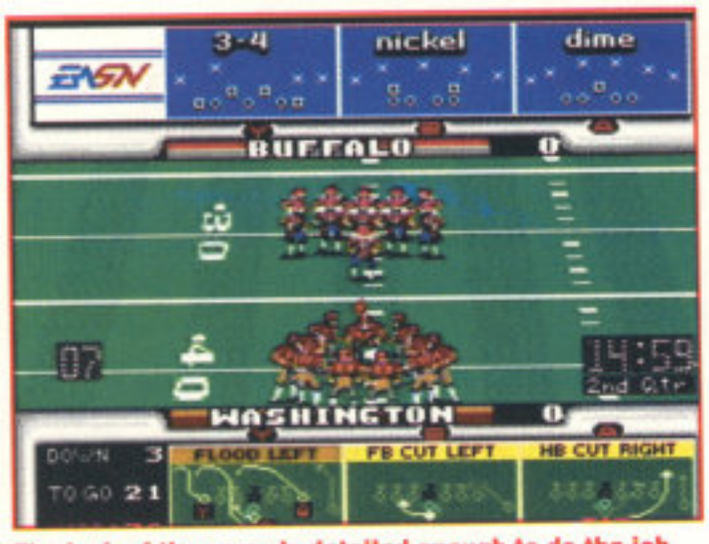
Level 3: 0007
Level 4: 3675
Level 5: 9025
Level 6: 1813
Level 7: 3353



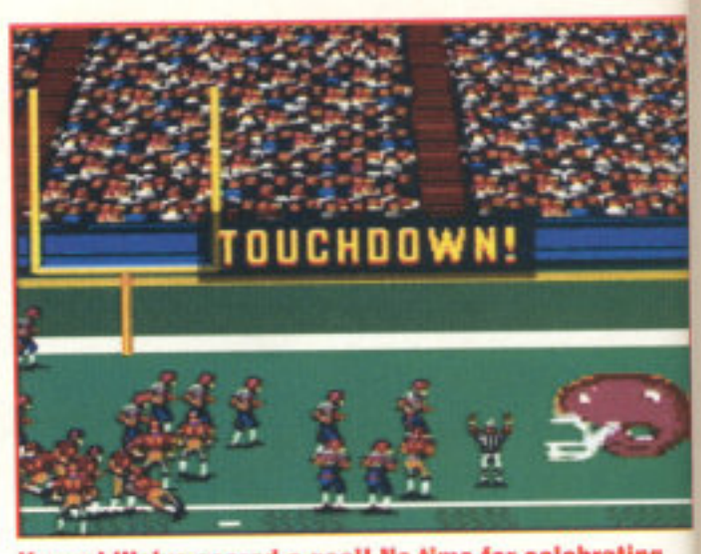
This helicopter shoot-'em-up bit may be, well, crap as far as horizontally scrolling blasters are concerned, but it's better than the assorted platform levels!



We all know what American football's really all about, don't we? That's right, military-style strategy and statistics. And here's a screen packed with the stuff.



The look of the game is detailed enough to do the job, that's for sure, with dinky little player sprites and plenty of easy-to-access menu items.



Yowza! We've scored a goal! No time for celebrating though – you can't relax for a minute, lest the other guy (or your computer opponent) takes advantage.

JOHN MADDEN '93

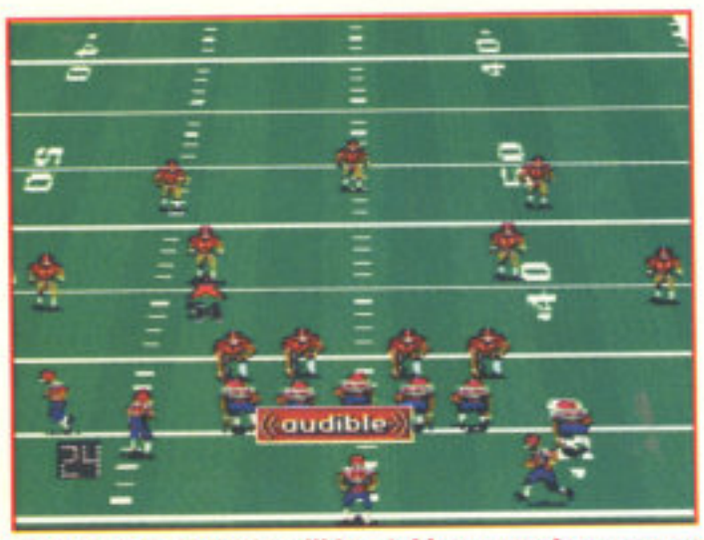
UK Release

Game: John Madden'93
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1/2 simultaneous
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Electronic Arts' updated version of their amazingly popular American football sim isn't the first to appear on Super Nintendo (the original *John Madden Football* received so-so reviews on Super NES in the States, and has never been officially released in this country), but it *is* one of the first games to show that maybe EA can do it on the machine after all. 'Doing it' in this instance, of course, refers to simply assigning programmers with some notion of how the Super Nintendo works to the project – too many times great Amiga and Mega Drive EA games have come to the Super NES looking slower, less playable and generally ropier than before (when, needless to say, the opposite should be the case). *John Madden '93* shows that okay, they may still not be better than the Mega Drive versions yet, but at least EA's recent releases are fit to hold their heads high alongside them.

In this particular instance, for example, the Super NES version still isn't quite as graphically slick as the Mega Drive one – scrolling a 3D pitch plus all those players around would seem to have taken its toll, with things getting jerky fairly frequently – but it'll do. No, we're not quite sure why our one's graphically inferior either – with the massive benefits of Mode 7 to handle the scrolling field, you'd think our version should be smoother than the MD's, not less so – but you clearly can't deny the evidence of your own eyes.

What the Super NES version does have going for it, though, is speed – though it does jerk, everything scrolls around very quickly. It's up to you whether you think this makes it more fun or not – some people complain you don't really get enough time to see what's going on and react accordingly, but it does give our version a slightly more action-packed feel. Couple that with improved use of audibles and other strategy elements and you get a game that, while quite a bit better than the original Super NES *Madden*, still doesn't quite qualify as a definite must-buy. It *is* fun though, and easily the best game of its type on the machine, so it's certainly well worth considering.



We've just called an audible – told our guys to rearrange themselves to catch the other fellas wrong footed.

John Madden '93 tries its best to be authentic throughout – and certainly does the job well enough that we wouldn't know any better. Here's a game about to start.

HOW TO WIN WITH MADDEN '93

Getting nowhere in *Madden*? Want some help? Easy – here're the codes to allow you to select your favourite teams:

PTHNBBLD – Madden greats vs Buffalo '93
PTMNFBVD – Madden Greats vs All Madden
PTSNFCGF – Madden Greats vs San Fransisco '84
GHHCBBVB – Philadelphia vs Washington
GHMCDBHC – Philadelphia vs Green Bay
GHSCDDDC – Philadelphia vs Cincinnati
GDGFBBSB – Buffalo vs Houston
GDLFDBFC – Buffalo vs Oakland
GDRFDDMC – Buffalo vs Green Bay

There you go – it's easy when you know how.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	70%	81%
GAMELIFE 85%	OVERALL SCORE:	83%

VERDICT: About as good as an American football game could possibly get – though perhaps not quite up there with the MD version.

JIMMY CONNORS' PRO TENNIS TOUR

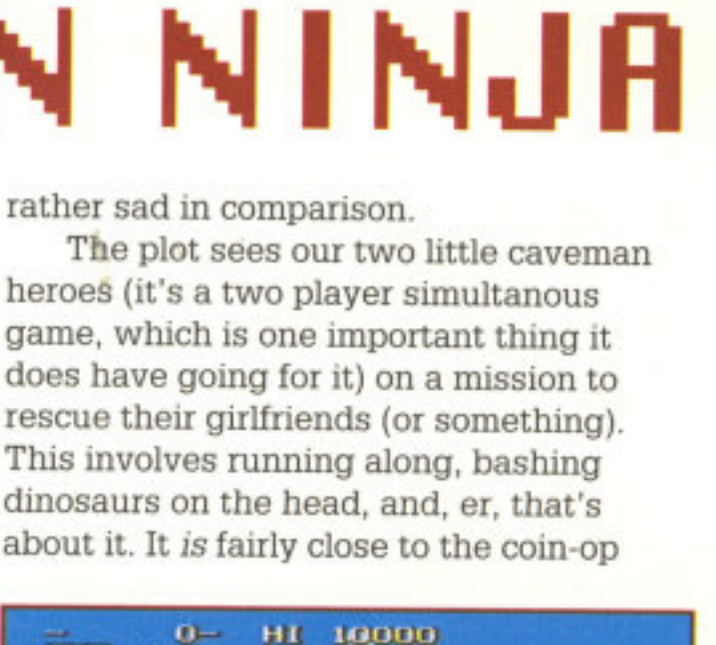
UK Release

Game: Jimmy Connors
Publisher: UBI Soft
Developer: Blue Byte
Price: £44.99
Players: 1/4 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Few would argue that *Super Tennis*, one of the first Super Nintendo releases, is simply the best tennis game on any machine, and hugely good fun even if you're not normally a fan of the sport. *Jimmy Connors* doesn't quite match up to it – the controls aren't as intuitive, and the ball does move about as realistically – but it has the enormous advantage of a four-player mode.

Four players? The Super Nintendo only comes with two controllers, so to take full advantage of the game you'll need to invest in a Super Multitap, a Japanese adapator (available on import in this country) that lets up to five people cluster round the SNES at once. And then *Jimmy Connors* really motors. To imagine how much more fun *Super Tennis* is with two players than one, multiply *Jimmy Connors* by that much twice (if you see what we mean) and that's how great the game is.

So which should you go for? Well, if you're only ever likely to play with one or two players, our advice would probably be to stick with *Super Tennis* – it's cheaper, if nothing else. But if you're got the necessary resources, both human and hardware, *Jimmy Connors* makes for a smashing alternative.



The graphics in *Jimmy Connors* aren't quite as cute or cartoony as the ones in *Super Tennis* – good news as far as some gameplayers, at least, are concerned.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	82%	88%
GAMELIFE 92%	OVERALL SCORE:	88%

VERDICT: Though *Super Tennis* is still, perhaps, slightly better with one player, this offers a great four-player option, making it a must buy.

FOUR INTO TWO?

The Super Multitap, the piece of hardware you'll need if you want to play *Jimmy Connors* with four people, is manufactured in Japan by Hudson Soft and isn't generally available in the UK yet. That's why UBI Soft aren't making much fuss about the game's four-player feature. But as more multi-player games become available – *Super Bomberman* is next on the list – the Multitap is bound to be released over here. We can't wait!

JOE & MAC CAVEMAN NINJA

UK Release

Game: Joe & Mac
Publisher: Elite
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1/2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Not the slickest of platform games, though it is nice and lively and colourful, *Joe & Mac* can really only be ranked as average – after all, if there's one thing the Super Nintendo has going for it in abundance, it's a whole range of top flight platform games. Next to the best of them – *Mario* et al – this one, to be honest, looks rather sad in comparison.

The plot sees our two little caveman heroes (it's a two player simultanous game, which is one important thing it does have going for it) on a mission to rescue their girlfriends (or something). This involves running along, bashing dinosaurs on the head, and, er, that's about it. It *is* fairly close to the coin-op original it's based on, some of the sound effects are funny, there are useful weapons to be collected (boomerangs and things), and it's all very cheerful, but really – that just ain't enough to hold the interest. We've seen better in all these categories so many times before. Add awkward controls and poor collision detection, and *Joe & Mac* doesn't really have all that much going for it.

Some of the cutest bits of the game involve using dinosaurs as bits of landscape – let's hope this boy doesn't decide to wake up for a bit!

Joe and Mac are neat looking little characters if you like that sort of thing. Unfortunately we don't – we like our sprites a bit less ugly and stupid looking.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	69%	70%
GAMELIFE 65%	OVERALL SCORE:	69%

VERDICT: The Super NES has a wealth of good platform game, but this isn't one of them – it's just too average in looks and feel to really recommend.

KICK OFF

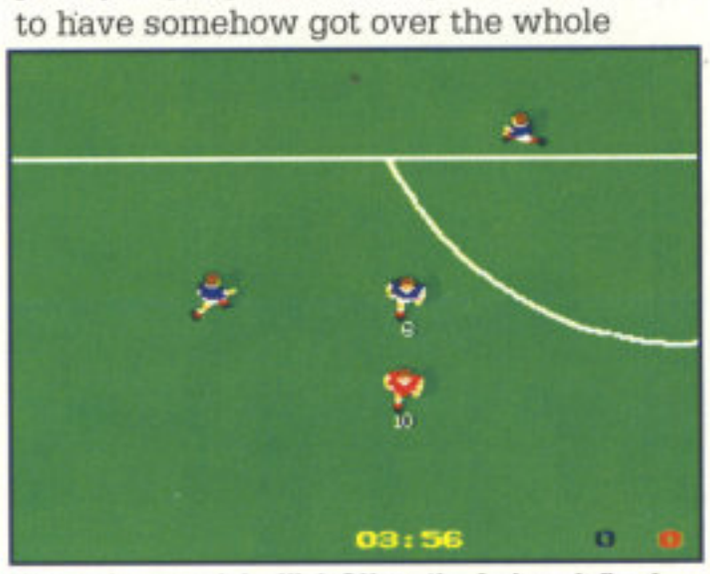
UK Release

Game: Kick Off
Publisher: Anco
Developer: Imagineer
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Kick Off is a complete git to review. It's a game whose fans are absolutely fanantical about it, and would defend it with their lives if necessary. But nobody at *Super Play* likes it at all, and can't honestly see how anyone would.

The trouble, as we see it, is that the good side of the game – it can actually be really enjoyable – is constantly struggling against a huge list of deficiencies. Some of these can simply be put down to bad programming – the way the scrolling often can't keep up with the ball, for example, or the ridiculous length of time it takes for a substitution to be made. But other faults are more deeply rooted, and can be traced right back to the Amiga original. To wit: the ludicrously close-up view of the action, which makes it very hard to judge where your players are in relation to the goals, or the nightmarish control system which is only really managable if you turn the speed right down and swap your joypad for a joystick.

Unfortunately, we tend to feel that *Kick Off* loses its struggle – the bad points outweigh its good points by a fair margin. But the middling mark we've given it reflects the fact that you might disagree, and have lots of fun with it. After all plenty of people love the game, and seem to have somehow got over the whole pinball feel of the entire thing. Either way, though, we reckon that either *Striker* or *Sensible Soccer*, two new football games due out later this year (with *Striker* due any minute), would probably be much better bets.



Mmm, nice mow job. *Kick Off*, on the Amiga, defined the way footie games should look – overhead view, lots of little sprites, and loads of speed.

TIME FOR A REMATCH?

Waiting in the wings is *Super Goal*, the sequel to *Kick Off* which is currently doing the rounds on computer formats and is available on the SNES in Japan and America. Will it improve on things? Or will it retain the old weaknesses? We'll have to wait and see.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
48%	42%	55%
GAMELIFE 72%	OVERALL SCORE:	52%

VERDICT: *Kick Off* has its fans, we know, but we're not amongst them – the game's too uncontrollable to be fun.

KING ARTHUR'S WORLD

UK Release

Game: King Arthur's World
Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: Argonaut
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Psygnosis, the creators of *Lemmings*, have a lot to answer for – a new lookalike game seems to crawl out of the woodwork every couple of months. To be fair, *King Arthur's World* isn't a straight rip-off, but uses similar controls to great effect. Set in a well presented medieval world, it's your job to get the little king character (Arthur, natch) to his objective on each of 30 levels – you do this by jiggling around loads of icons, keeping your eye on lots of different characters, and hopefully using your mens' abilities to their best effect.

For instance, you've got knights, ordinary soldiers, archers, wizards, engineers, and little men who carry around barrels filled with explosives, and you've got to jiggle them about the battlefield, hopefully getting, say, a knight to hold back the other army while your archers rain arrows on them from a safe vantage point, or the enginners to batter down a door while someone else protects them from behind. It's all got a very nice feel, plenty of well-thought-out puzzles, and is a bit more free form than *Lemmings* (no bad thing) – the real gripe (apart from the fact that some of the graphics are only average) has to be that the controls are awful, taking a *lot* of getting used to. Indeed, they're often so badly laid out that you keep doing things you didn't mean to, leaving you desperately trying to make amends. This shouldn't, however, put you off an otherwise an absorbing little game.

Those familiar with the famous *Lemmings* – and that's probably most of you – will be immediately at home here. The look of the thing is very similar.

However, what *is* different about the game – enough to make it a worthwhile purchase in its own right, is the way it tells more of a story than the abstract *Lemmings*.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
74%	60%	90%
GAMELIFE 86%	OVERALL SCORE:	83%

VERDICT: Not bad at all, all told. It looks very like *Lemmings*, but uses a similar puzzle format and control method to tell almost a historical story. You're likely to get completely lost in it.

KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN-HOUSE

UK Release

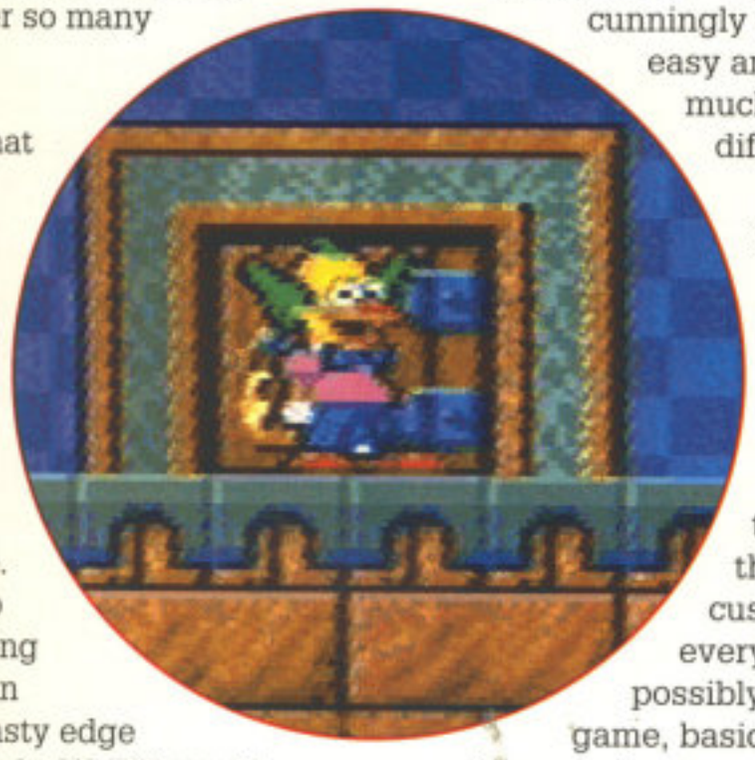
Game: Krusty's Super Fun-House
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

The Simpsons are one of those nightmare licences – a bit like the *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* or the *WWF Wrestlers* – where, although the chances are you've never seen the original show, you've probably tripped over so many horrible little plastic figures, cuddy toys, board games and what have you that you know it's just *got* to be awful.

(Although actually, as anyone who's got Sky TV will be able to tell you, *The Simpsons* is really quite funny, and rather well done. Sort of a surreal soap opera, with very strong characters, and still in possession of that nasty edge that you'd have thought US TV would have crushed out of it by now. Although, whether you really want to trust a Sky TV viewer's opinion on what's funny is another matter...)

Er... where was all this getting us? Oh yes – Krusty. He's actually a character out of *The Simpsons* (Bart's hero, in fact, and a sort of rather-dodgy-looking clown) and it's his fun-house that's been over-run by rats. They wander around each level in a *Lemmings*y sort of way, and he's got to get rid of them all by leading them to a rat exterminating machine. (These range from crushers to electrocuters.) But, whereas in *Lemmings* you clear away all the Lemmings by setting them to work to clear a path to the exit, in *Krusty's* it's Krusty who does all the running around. He's got to carry blocks about, move bits of tubing and avoid baddies (like snakes).

And how does it work out in practice? Well, the graphics are all fine and everything (although the colours look oddly drab), the sound's okay, and – most importantly – the puzzles have been cunningly devised, starting off easy and getting much, much (much) more difficult later on.

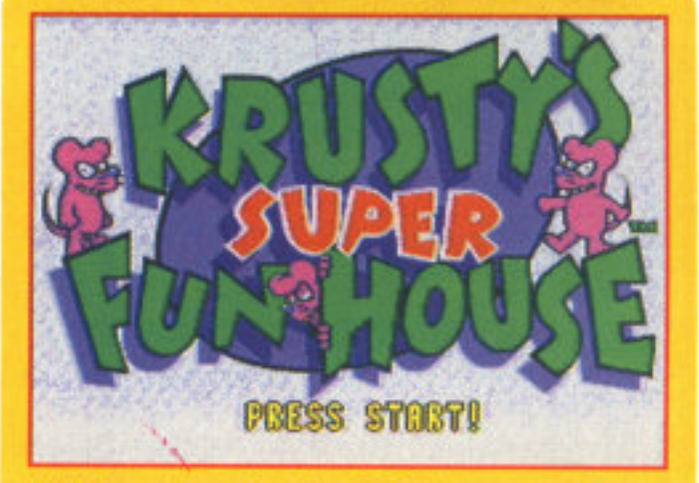


The game's packed full of fun things too – with secret rooms to discover, nice clear graphics, suitable spot effects cropping up all over the place, baddies to throw massive, sloppy custard pies at – everything you could possibly hope for from a fun game, basically.

It's a good release, then. All that's preventing it from getting a higher mark is a) the slightly annoying way you can only see a tiny area of the playing area at once, making it awkward to wrap your mind around a puzzle that might sprawl over several screens-worth, and b) that it's all a bit slow-moving and, you could argue, repetitive. Indeed, if you're possessed of higher than average metabolic rate, could prove to be just a little – yes – boring. That said, however, we know plenty who love it. Perhaps it would be fairest to say that it's probably most likely to appeal to younger people, and leave it at that.

(And yes, for those who were wondering – we too were a bit unsure that having a suspicious looking, oddly dressed character with elaborate – if not to say, slightly mad – plans to kill lots of rats was such a good idea for the centrepiece of a children's game. Until we remembered a rather impressive literary precedent, that is. Could this really be meant as an updated version of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn, anyone...?)

KRUSTY LAID BARE



Well... what the heck? Here are all the codes you'll need to get see you through the game with a real minimum of fuss.

Level 2: SKINNER
Level 3: SCRATCHY
Level 4: BARTDUDE
Level 5: BOUVIER

The graphics are bright and crisp and clean throughout the game – only those with a hatred of Bart and chums won't get some pleasure out of them.

The basic gameplay is of a problem-solving type – how do you get a certain number of rats across the screen from one side to the other.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90%	74%	95%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
75%		79%

VERDICT: Not bad at all – Acclaim's series of *Simpsons* game have actually turned out to be, generally, rather good. *Krusty's* is no exception – a neat little arcade puzzler.

THE LEGEND OF Z
A LINK TO THE P

UK Release

Game: The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Princess Zelda and Link, her champion, are as much a part of Nintendo mythology as Mario and Luigi. (In fact, to the Japanese they're probably more so. The Japanese are absolutely potty about this sort of game.) This is actually the third *Zelda* game – the series dates back to 1987, and two NES games called *The Legend Of Zelda* and *The Adventure Of Link*. The whole thing's the brainchild of a chap called Shigeru Miyamoto, who's been responsible for all Nintendo's best games – *Super Mario World* included – so you'd expect it to be something special. And indeed it is.

It's also ideal if you're looking for something 'a bit different'; it couldn't be further from the shoot-'em-ups and platform games that tend to predominate on the Super Nintendo. You can be the most cack-handed games player in the world and still have fun with *Zelda*. All that's required is a sense of adventure and a willingness to stay up for night after night until you've finished the game (not that you'll have much choice in the matter – there's a battery back-up to save your position, but you're unlikely to want to switch the game off).

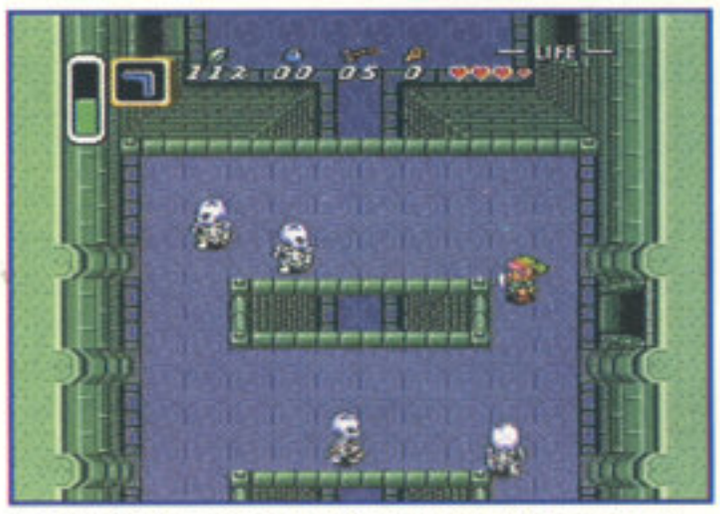
Zelda games revolve around the idea of a quest, you see, which takes a similar course in each of the games – accident-prone Princess Zelda has been captured by Ganon, and Link's got to find and rescue her. In the case of *Zelda: A Link to the Past*, this doesn't actually take very long. But once Zelda's free, the adventure's far from over, and Link still has to search around for and recover three heavily-guarded pendants and a sword.

And rather than simply hacking your way mindlessly through wave after wave of palace guards and monsters, in *Zelda* you're a proper adventurer. You've got to explore the land of Hyrule, talk to its inhabitants, solve puzzles, collect treasure and magical items and – okay – hack your way through quite a few monsters and

WHATEVER NEXT?

The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past was launched in Japan a couple of years ago now, so the question is, of course, when's the next *Zelda* game coming out? Unfortunately Nintendo's games tend to remain veiled in secrecy until a few weeks before their release, so anything we say at this stage is bound to be speculation. But when Nintendo launch the Super Nintendo CD ROM system early next year, they're going to have to have some quality software ready to promote it. And what could be more perfect than a new *Zelda* game? (*A Link To The Past* was, after all, orginally going to coincide with the launch of the Super Nintendo itself, but in the end it appeared rather later.) The CD ROM would be ideal for storing the huge amount of text and graphical data needed for a role-playing game too, and the music would be awesome.

The only places Mode 7 does its funky stuff are in these map screens. Important places are highlighted as you progress, while every corner is worth exploring.



As Link (that's him on the right) searches for pendants in the East Palace, he's likely to come across a) guards or other nasties (as here) and b) locked doors.

The game starts with this sequence, as poor faithful Link gets woken from his sleep by Zelda's cries for help. Stupid woman's got herself in trouble again!

One nice thing is the way the weather changes throughout the game – as Link sets out on his quest it's raining. What a good start, eh?

Link isn't limited to walking around the place – he can swim too. Zora's waterfall contains a pair of flippers he can use to get him around lakes and rivers.

Remember how we said it was worth searching around everywhere? Here's a case-in-point – removing these shrubs reveals a secret passageway, and a weapon.

ZELDA PAST

LEGEND OF ZELDA: FUN THINGS TO TRY

- In the Light World, find a chicken and attack it repeatedly with your sword. Eventually a flock flock of chickens will decend upon the screen, whereupon you'll probably regret ever listening to us.
- To catch a Faerie you'll need the Bug-Catching Net and a Bottle. If you die, the Faerie will then allow you to retstart from the exact spot you were last standing.
- The Pegasus Shoes can be used to ram things. Trees are especially worthy of your attention – lots of useful things will drop out of them.

palace guards. Along the way, Link will will steadily become a more and more capable hero, finding beefier weapons along with magic spells and special items, such as the Hook Shot which can be used to cross ravines Batrope-style. He'll also be able to collect build up a supply of Heart Containers, which equate roughly to an energy bar, and protect him against hits by baddies.

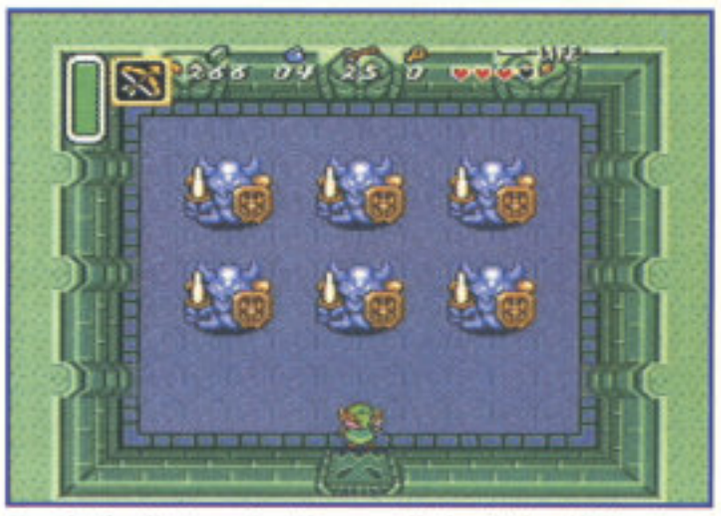
Don't expect to be blown away by *Zelda*'s graphics. They're pretty enough, and wonderfully colourful, but their primary purpose is to make everything as clear and simple as possible, so you won't find things whizzing about in Mode 7 very often (except on the map). What the game's all about is having fun, and you'll have lots of it. The plot unfolds much as if you're reading a really good book (albeit rather a predictable one) with you trying to work out where the story's meant to go next, and guiding Link appropriately.

And, if *Zelda* can be said to have a failing, that's where it's to be found. In some ways it's *too* much like reading a book. Making it through *Zelda* is really just a question of putting in the hours, keeping going until you've worked out what you're meant to be doing next. You're never in any danger of dying and having to go back to the start – the 'Save and Continue' option and battery back-up see to that – and none of the problems you'll come across are all that difficult. The game's also been designed so that you'll never get permanently stuck, even if you find you've forgotten something important somewhere along the way.

Once you're actually playing the game, however, that problem will cease to be a consideration. It's just such good fun, even if you know you'll reach the end eventually, and should take you at least a good forty of fifty hours to play through.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85%	84%	94%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	93%
92%		

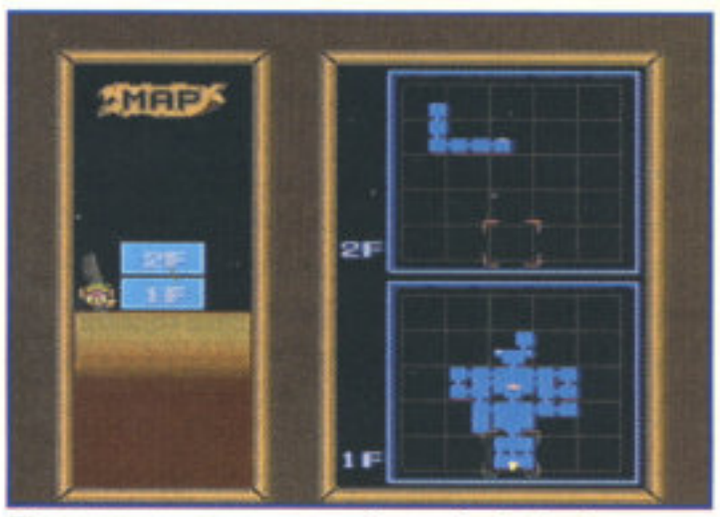
VERDICT: Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. Brilliantly put together, one of the few RPGs on the machine, and a must buy.



Here's the first pendant boss – all six of him. Killing 'em is actually quite easy, epecially if you've got a bow.

Someone you'll find it useful to contact in Kakariko village is the Elder's grandson – he'll tell you how to find Sahasrahla, the wisest person in the land.

Once you've rescued Zelda, your next mission forces you to find three pendants before you can obtain the Magic Sword. Luckily the first one isn't far.



These map screens appear when you're in the dungeons. You'll need to collect a compass before you can use it, though. Even the position of the boss is handily marked!

We like these map screens so much, here's another rather attractive looking one. A quick press of the X button and it scrolls around in impressive Mode 7.

Yes, you're right – it's a little *Duck Shoot* sub game. Pay the man a few rupees, fire your arrows accurately at the ducks, and you can earn loadsa cash!

Here's Link, getting very close to rescuing Zelda now. There are just a few spiral steps to negotiate and that's about it. However, the adventure's just beginning...

Once you've sprung Zelda from her cell, she'll toddle along behind you like an obedient puppy dog – a very funny effect. This secret door may find us the way out.

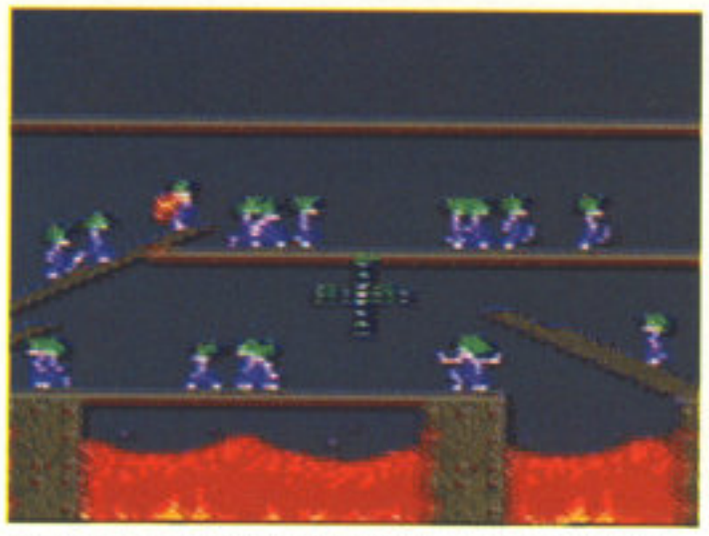
LEMMINGS

UK Release

Game: Lemmings
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: DMA Design/ Psygnosis
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Lemmings isn't the easiest game to explain. And usually when that happens with a game it suggests it's something a little different. And, indeed, *Lemmings* is different. In fact, it's probably its differentness that makes it so appealing.

Anyway, back to that explanation. On each of the game's levels (there are over 100 of them) you're given a team of lemmings who need to be taken to the safety of the exit. Left to their own devices they wander around and get into all sorts of trouble, so you've got try to keep an eye on them (there are usually about 50 to worry about, all doing their own thing), and make a safe path to the exit by singling out lemmings and endowing them with special abilities – bridge-building, parachuting, digging, that sort of thing. Each level thus constitutes a puzzle, and it goes without saying that the puzzles get harder as the game goes on.



They're cute, they're blue (with green hair) and you've got to guide them from the start to the exit by endowing them with special powers – they're the Lemmings.

Once you've got the hang of it, it proves to be massively addictive, and a game that appeals to just about anybody.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	81%	80%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	86%
90%		

VERDICT: A classic game which plays as well on the SNES as it does on any other machine.

LEMMINGS NEWS

Lemmings 2 is on the way from original publishers Psygnosis, and makes great advances over the original, with a more structured approach and loads more different sorts of lemmings. Don't let that disuade you from buying the original, though. Oh, and if you reckon the earlier levels are hard, try entering RKVHCBS as a code. (Heh heh!)

LETHAL WEAPON

UK Release

Game: Lethal Weapon
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Ocean's *Lethal Weapon* film conversion (a game that, by the way, tries to cope with all three movies at once, not just the first one) is like the diametric opposite of the same company's *Cool World* et al. While *Cool World* had nice graphics but an almost unbelievable lack of anything meaty to do, *Lethal Weapon* goes right back to basics in the visual department (these are flat, uneventful, possessed of tiny sprites and generally rather ropey), but at least makes up for it in part by making sure we've got a game in here. Some of it is very nice – the way, as with Ocean's (far superior) *Addams Family* games, that you can do many of the levels in any order you like, the way the difficulty level is pitched (very more-ish) and things like that. As a basic, unadventurous platform shoot-'em-up it works quite well.

Unfortunately, however, various negative factors conspire to make it something less than a must-buy. Most of the baddies are unbelievably thick, just wandering around aimlessly, shooting at random; the inertia on the Mel Gibson character is horrible; and the gameplay ranges from the dull to the annoying. Not a bad game, then, but no classic – and hopelessly unambitious in many ways.

Those famously thick baddies prove to be not quite so thick after all, as Riggs succumbs to a hail of bullets. He's bound to be back, though – so don't worry.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
60%	60%	55%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	57%
66%		

VERDICT: Hardly an inspired attempt to portray the films, and a game that'll rapidly drive you to frustration.

LETHAL WEAPON MADE EASY

Finding *Lethal Weapon* rather too damn lethal? Then try these Action Replay codes – they'll almost certainly help.

7E02 2606	Unlimited lives
7E02 2203	Unlimited ammo

MAGIC SWORD

UK Release

Game: Magic Sword
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Here we've just picked up a little friend (that chap in the red suit) from that doorway, and he's helped to get rid of the skeletons. What a star.

Don't be fooled by the Capcom name. This *is* by Capcom, but it isn't a patch on *Street Fighter II*, *Final Fight*, *Mickey's Magical Quest* or, well, just about every other SNES game the company's ever done.

And the blame has to rest with the original coin-op on which this is based. It's a simple slash-'em-up, where you walk along a series of scrolling levels killing baddies with your 'magic sword'. The only vaguely interesting feature in it is the way you can pick up little friends with special weapons of their own, who'll follow you around helping you to tackle the enemy. Nice – for a bit.

Graphically and sonically it's pretty dull, despite the occasional nicely-designed sprite and – although everything works okay, it's reasonably playable (if suspiciously easy), and it does get slightly better as you play through it – it's just so lacking in inspiration that... that... well, that we simply couldn't recommend it. What were Capcom thinking of?

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
67%	55%	60%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
56%		58%

VERDICT: Not Capcom's finest hour. This looks scruffy, and just seems to be second rate all round.

MARIO PAINT

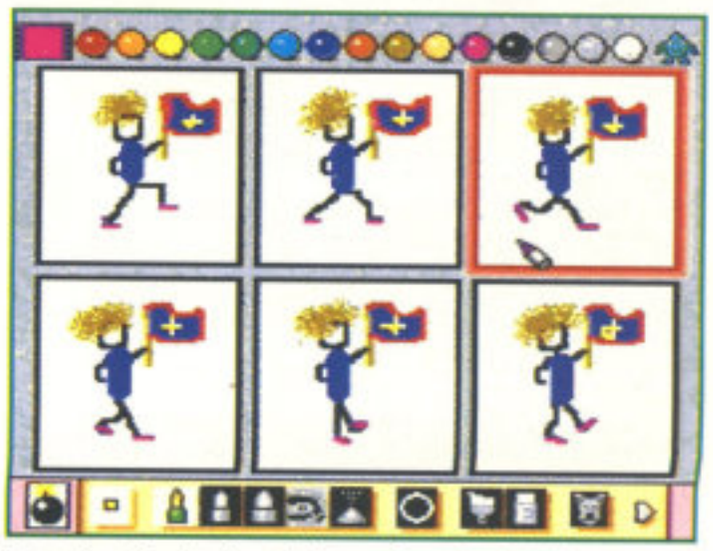
UK Release

Game: Mario Paint
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £59.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

To date the only non-game that's been released for the Super Nintendo, *Mario Paint* is actually a very simplified, friendlied-up version of the sort of paint packages you get on home computers. It has one very big flaw – the fact that you can't save more than one picture into the battery backed-up memory, and the only other thing you can do with your creations is (fiddlily) record them onto video cassette – but otherwise comes across as quite a neat, if limited and rather crude, affair. Everything you draw comes out looking hopelessly chunky, for instance, and while things are presented with Nintendo's usual panache and humour, the lack of colours (there are only 16 available) does limit things somewhat.

Firmly aimed at youngsters, and bound to be appreciated most by them, *Mario Paint* is fun but limited stuff. Still, coming up with little six-frame animations is something everyone can have fun with, and the music composition bit can be a laugh, too.

Don't write this off too quickly has to be the gist of things, then. And, of course, it's the only way to get a mouse.



The animation feature lets you do up to six little doodles, and then flip between them to create animation. Of course, it helps if you can draw...

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	60%	60%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
45%		55%

VERDICT: Fun for kids, but it could have been so much better. The mouse is worth having, though.

THE ONLY SUPER NINTENDO MOUSE IN THE WORLD!

Mario Paint comes complete with the only mouse designed to fit the Super Nintendo, something that's bound to become very useful on other games (especially RPGs, flight sims and things like *Populous*), if only the game designers allow for it – and lots of them are. It's almost reason alone for this game/paint program/whatever to be encouraged.

MICKEY'S MAGICAL QUEST

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO PLUTO? MICKEY'S ON THE CASE...

Goofy pitches at Mickey, and overshoots! Pluto rushes past to retrieve the ball, but oddly disappears – so Mickey chases after him, but falls over a cliff, landing in evil Emperor Pete's garden...

UK Release

Game: The Magical Quest
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £59.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Everything Capcom touches, pretty much, seems to turn to gold, and this proves it as well as anything else (and that includes *SFII*) – a prettier, more appealing, better thought out platform game you'd be hard pushed to find. Yes, it does have its faults – chiefly the traditional ones of these top flight cute platform game, that it's too short and too easy – but somehow they're easy to forgive. The whole damn thing's just so lovable, it could get away with just about anything.

The plotline (as told in a dinky intro sequence) is simple – the evil Emperor Pete (a large dog-like affair) has kidnapped Pluto, leading our boy Mickey through a six-level quest to get him back. We start off by climbing a giant beanstalk, go through some spooky woods (including an underwater section somehow found inside a giant tree), enter a sort of lava-filled canyon, rise up through some bizarrely-shaped mountains, plough through an ice world and eventually end up inside Emperor Pete's castle – a fairly average-sounding quest made that much more exciting by not only the spotless level designs, but by the addition of numerous surprising and original game-play elements along the way.

We're not just talking secret rooms to discover here either, though they are to be found in abundance – experimentation is rewarded every step of the way. Who, for instance, would have guessed that the beanstalk's tomato-like fruit can be twirled by Mickey so their leaves act like temporary helicopter rotors, lifting our hero above the action? Or that some of the very platforms you jump on can be picked up and used as weapons? Both of these

Stuck on the boss characters at the end of each level of *The Magical Quest*? Then

Level 1: The Dragon-thing
There are actually several ways to kill this tusked snake creature, and they're all dead easy. You can either use the gold bricks (collect them from the pink one), or the bits of shell that drop off the boss when you hurt him. Or, indeed, you can simply use Mickey's standard mode of attack, the rather bizarre bottom-bounce. Towards the end the boss tries to jump on you, which makes things a bit tougher, but a well-timed jump, so he actually leaps up under your bottom bounce, should quickly see him off.

Level 2: The Giant Spider
You'll want to be in your magician's outfit to see this guy off. Just try to keep out of his way, while blasting continuously, and you should be able to beat him, no problem! (No, really!)

Level 3: The Angry Face
The guy's a sort of disembodied head made of lava, or something fiery. Use your hose (you should be the fireman at this point) to cool him down – he'll turn blue when you blast him. He heals himself quickly if you give him too much of a break, though, so make sure you keep the pressure up. Don't forget to keep topping up your water level either!

LOOKS FAMILIAR?

If you find *Mickey's Magical Quest* vaguely reminiscent of something then yes, you're right – much of the look of the game, and even a few of the game-play elements, are very close to the Mega Drive *Mickey Mouse* game, *Castle Of Illusion*. The giant tomato sequence from the first part of the game, for instance, is very similar to a giant apple bit in *Castle Of Illusion*, while the whole spooky-forests-and-castles setting is common to both games. *Castle* is actually a bit more challenging than *Magical Quest* too (a rare instance of a Mega Drive game actually being harder than a SNES one!), though not quite as glorious looking. As the two games were put together by two completely different creative teams, however, it would seem that Disney are very specific about what they want when they licence out a game featuring their number one character...

Near the beginning of the game, and interesting gameplay elements are already making themselves known. Mickey can throw the blocks he jumps on, for instance!

Here's one of Mickey's neat little outfits – the fireman's kit, complete with hose. Gameplay often involves quick swapping between outfits.

are to be discovered on the first few screens, and there are plenty more along the way.

One of the other great things about *Magical Quest* are the baddy designs. Now we all know that Capcom are no slouches when it comes to creating distinctive, memorable characters – just look at the *SFII* cast, for instance – but these guys look like the were thought up by the Disney studios themselves. How many game sprites could you really say are good enough to sit comfortably alongside the cast of a *Little Mermaid*, or a *Beauty & The Beast*? These guys are – just check out the screenshots dotted around the page for proof.

However, perhaps the best gameplay element of them all takes the form of Mickey's very varied wardrobe. Upon entering a new level, the standard Mickey sprite quickly draws a little curtain affair across the screen, and re-emerges in one of three fabulous outfits. Feel the need for a little long range firepower? Then Mickey's magician outfit is just the ticket, allowing you to fire magic bolts. (He can also swim underwater without drowning in this one, though we've yet to work out why.) Need to put out fires, or push obstacles out of the way? Then Mickey's fireman outfit, complete with high pressure water house, is just the ticket. Trapped on the mountain sequence? Then his Swiss-style mountaineer's outfit, complete with grappling hook and chirpy feathered cap, is the get-up for you. (Niftily, Goofy makes a guest appearance at this point, presenting Mickey with the mountaineer kit.)

What else can we say about the game to encourage you to buy it? Well, the sound's great too, with a selection of great bouncy tunes. And the end of level (and occasional mid-level) bosses are well thought out, if a bit easy to dispose of once you've learned their attack patterns. Indeed, the only fly in the ointment, though it is a serious one, is the difficulty level at which the game is pitched. Even on Normal setting (not Easy), this is only going to take the average gamesplayer a few hours to complete. Sure it has its tricky bits, but the game's so over generous with its continues that you're bound to get past them eventually – it's simply made too easy for you. A great game then, and one we love, but be warned – it ain't gonna last you forever. (Great for kids, though!)

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
95%	91%	92%
GAMELIFE 78%	OVERALL SCORE:	89%

VERDICT: Not really all that big, nor is it particularly hard, but *The Magical Quest* remains, despite that, one of the best games available for the machine.

have no fear – we've taken them out, and we're here to show you how to do it too!

Level 4: The Giant Bird
This guy's easy too – hang onto the pegs until he flies past you, then grab his egg before he cracks it and throw it at him. Repeat until you've killed him.

Level 5: The Skating Bear-thing
We still argue in the office about what sort of creature this most appealing of bosses is – is he a bear, or is he a walrus? – but we've no disagreement about how to kill him. There are two tricky bits – one is simply staying out of his way. The other one is that you'll need to keep changing your costume as you fight him – sometimes you'll want to be in your fireman's outfit, to use your hose to stop his fireballs in your tracks. Otherwise you want to be in your magician's outfit, and blast him from as far away as possible.

Level 6: Emperor Pete
Surprisingly, Pete ain't too hard either. Keep hitting him with your magic blasts, once in a while waiting for the flying lamps to appear so you can top up your magic. And that's really it – you've rescued Pluto, and finished the game!

NHLPA HOCKEY '93

UK Release

Game: NHLPA Hockey '93
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

If Electronic Arts has a reputation for anything, it's great sports games – and they don't get much better than the Mega Drive version of the super-fast *NHLPA Hockey*. Luckily, its Super Nintendo equivalent is one of EA's best attempts on the machine to date, and lets the side down not a jot – despite slightly jerky graphics, there's no faulting this fast, furious ice hockey sim, and in two-player head-to-head mode it's nothing short of a work of genius. EA have chosen a forced perspective overhead view to display the game, making it look not unlike the *Kick Off* school of soccer games, and it plays just as fast – more realistically too, as the dynamics of real ice hockey (smallish play area and fast speed) mean the sport's real end-to-end stuff.

Typical of EA, too, are the number of options offered – a massive range of real teams and players (many with their own special 'signature moves'), easily customisable rules, loads of statistics, small beat-'em-up-like rucks that crop up every so often, and assorted ways to play (including both human players against a computer team, if that's how you want it).

It all adds up to a very appealing release. Ice hockey is an American sport that anyone can enjoy (it's a very simple game, with few rules to learn, and none of the stop/start stuff that can put people off American football), and EA's game is easily the best depiction of it yet.

The game starts with a face-off – both teams fighting (quite literally) for control of the puck.

NHLPA: the easy way

Want to get through to the finals that much more quickly? Then try these codes:

GBMYY73ZPJJRX3ZD
Second round: Montreal vs Long Island

G7113H5PYZWBKRYC
Semi final: Montreal vs New York

C4W53V9421JJRYH5
Semi final: Los Angeles vs Minesota

C42BWBG00P37LV9J
Final: Los Angeles vs Boston

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
74%	80%	88%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
85%		87%

VERDICT: Ice hockey is a game ripe for translation to the SNES, and, jerky graphics aside, *NHLPA* makes the best job of it yet.

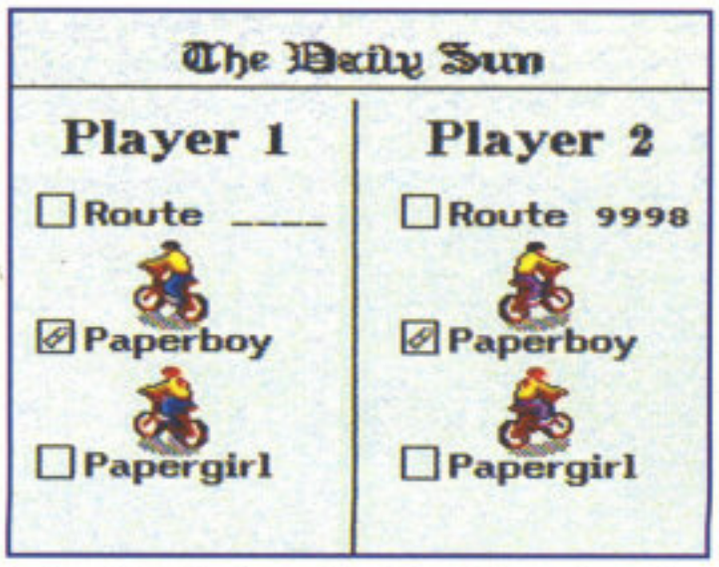
PAPERBOY 2

UK Release

Game: Paperboy 2
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

A dictionary definition of the word 'boring' could easily be something along the lines of: 'adj. equivalent to the experience of playing *Paperboy 2*'. It really is an extremely boring game, the true tedium of which can't honestly be appreciated until you've experienced it.

Don't, though. Although in principle it sounds sort of all right – cycling along a series of diagonally-scrolling roads tossing newspapers through letterboxes and dodging obstacles – and has been executed to a reasonably high standard, there's so little to actually do it's hard thinking of ways of writing about it. There's just a sort of void where the gameplay ought to be, a void which seems to draw the lifeforce out of your body as you play, and meaning that you have to really, really will yourself to stare at it for long enough to complete a paper round. (Gritting your teeth helps.)



In the spirit of the times, *Paperboy 2* lets you choose to be either a paper*boy* or a paper*girl*. But it makes not the slightest bit of difference to how the game plays.

Avoid the obstacles! Deliver the newspapers! Pick up the pick-upable things! Break people's windows! Try valiantly to stay awake! It's all go in *Paperboy 2*.

INTERESTING PAPERBOY 2 FACT

Try as one might, there's absolutely nothing even remotely interesting to say about *Paperboy 2*. Nothing at all. And that's a fact.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	40%	15%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
30%		29%

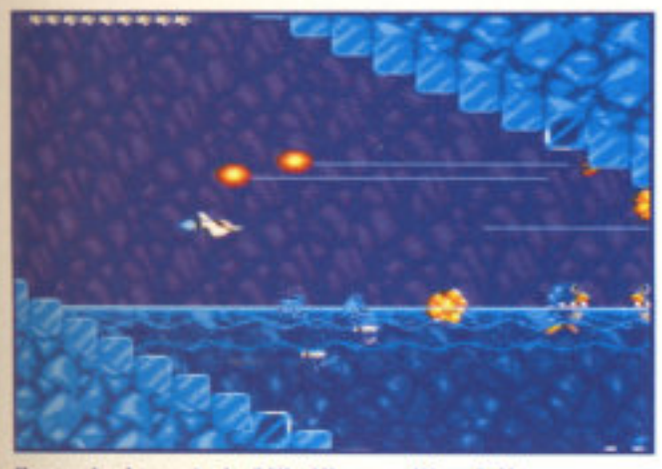
VERDICT: A faithful conversion of a coin-op whose minimal appeal lay in the handlebars you controlled it with. Really very boring indeed.

SUPER PARODIUS

UK Release

Game: Parodius
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Parodius is an important game, and here's why. It's not because it features some of the sweetest, most gorgeously colourful Super Nintendo graphics on the face of the earth – though that is undoubtedly true. It's not because the levels are skilfully, intriguingly put together, full of neat original touches and baddies-the-like-of-which-you've-never-seen-before – though we wouldn't deny that, either. No, it's because it almost single-handedly reintroduces the idea of playful fun to the shoot-'em-up. Yes, this is a blaster that's actually genuinely funny, from the main sprites – you can control an octopus, a penguin or Konami's Twinbee space-ship-with-boxing-gloves-on, as well as the more standard Vic Viper ship – to the end of level bosses, this is a game



Here we're in control of Vic Viper, with a full complement of 'options' (as those ball things are called), and about to plunge into an icy river. Brrr.

This giant cat/pirate ship, bristling with guns and, er, blue penguins, crops up right at the beginning of the game. From here on it just gets weirder and weirder.

Aw, no! She sighs when you hit her! But, unless you shoot her, she'll keep throwing flaming balls at you. That's the sort of thing baddies do. (Even nice ones.)

brimming with warped – and distinctly Japanese – imagination. Even the little penguins look as cute the thousandth time you kill them as they did the first.

True, infinite continues do make *Parodius* a bit easy to play all the way through (but remember, no shoot-'em-up is ever going to have a massively long game life), but this is still challenging, addictive (you have to work out the best ways to get through each level – you can't just fly in there blasting away and hope for the best) and well structured. It is, of course, all a warped take-off of Konami's earlier shoot-'em-up classic, *Gradius* (*Parodius* = parody of *Gradius*. Geddit?), and thus comes with a decently thought out level structure almost built in.

We love this game for its wit, imagination and graphic brilliance, while willingly admitting that it won't take too long for the average gameplayer to finish it. If ever the phrase 'small but perfectly formed' seemed like a suitable way to end a game review, this is the time.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91%	92%	90%
GAMELIFE 77%	OVERALL SCORE:	86%

VERDICT: Imaginative, funny, wonderful to look at and, while it won't take forever to complete, well worth buying.

HAVING FUN WITH PARODIUS

Like all Konami games, *Parodius* features a wealth of brilliant cheats and fun things to do incorporated into the gameplay, if only you can find them. Here are some of our favourites:

The standard Konami cheat
Nearly all Konami games feature a standard cheat that allows you to get further in a games – sometimes it gives you extra lives, sometimes invulnerability, sometimes it gives you lots of power-ups, that sort of thing. It goes like this: pause the game, then press UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, L, R, L, R, B, A, then unpause. Unfortunately, though, in *Parodius* this kills you, so we wouldn't recommend trying it!

For a full consignment of weapons
Pause the game, then press B, B, X, X, A, Y, A, Y, UP, L and unpause.

For invincibilty
Try this: pause, L, R, UP, RIGHT, A, LEFT, Y, DOWN, B, A, Y, A, Y, R, unpause. (Here 'L' and 'R' refer to the buttons on the top of the joypad, while LEFT and RIGHT refer to directions on the actual pad itself.)

For a single multiple
This cheat ain't that useful, but here goes anyway: UP, UP, D, D, L, R, L, R, X, X, B, B, Y, A, Y, A.

Switch 'Roulette' mode on and off
On the player select screen (where you get to chose between auto and manual power ups), hold down SELECT and press START three times.

To get the stage select screen
On the ship select screen, go to the octopus ship, and press UP, L and X simultanously. Hold them for about 30 seconds, if your fingers can take it, and the stage select screen should appear.

To zoom the pink octopus around the screen (!)
During the animated intro, with all the penguins watching TV, press UP and then, while holding UP and L, press X five times, B five times, Y five times and A five times. Now, when the pink octopus flies out of the screen, you'll be able to mover it around using the pad, and zoom it in and out with A and B. Weird, eh?

There are probably lots more (possibly even more bizarre) cheats in there too – watch out for news in *Super Play*.

PEBBLE BEACH GOLF

UK Release

Game: Pebble Beach Golf
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: T&E Soft
Price: £44.99
Players: 1-4 players
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

As with most golf games, *Pebble Beach* comes with a fair number of screens showing how you can approach each hole from various angles, plus handy tips to each one from on-screen experts.

Best golf game on the Super Nintendo? Well, it's a toss-up between this – *Pebble Beach* – and *Irem Skins*, a game that's currently only available on import, but which should be getting a UK release shortly.

And what's so good about *Pebble Beach*? Well, it's all just been done so well. As you'll be able to see, the graphics are gorgeous. (Although you won't be able to see how sluggishly they update. They're not too bad, though, and it's a price worth paying.) It's accurate, too – the ball flies about just like a real one, and the course (there's only one) is about as real as real can be. We would suggest that you turn down the music, though. Of course, the great thing about golf games is that, even if you wouldn't dream of picking up a set of clubs for real, they're really good fun, especially with two.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	59%	95%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
80%		86%

VERDICT: One of the best golf games available on the Super Nintendo. Everybody should have one in their collection, and we'd go for this one.

THE PEBBLE BEACH FAMILY OF GOLF GAMES

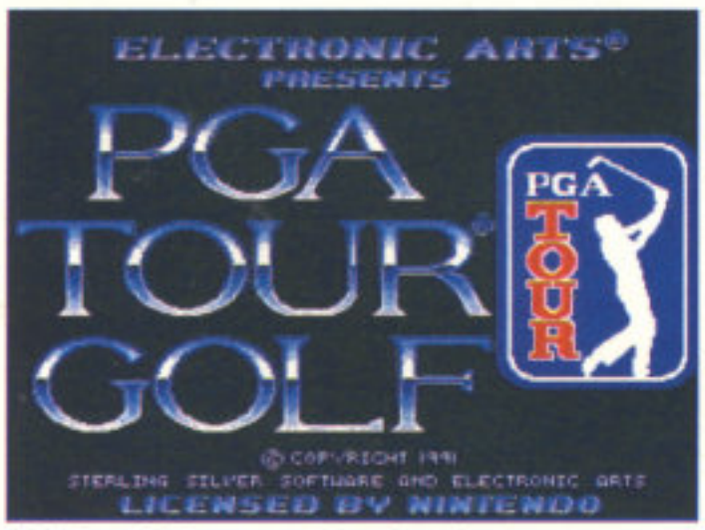
Pebble Beach is actually one (and the only generally available in the UK) of a series of golf games from developers T&E Soft, the others being *Augusta Masters 3D Golf*, *Waialae Country Club* and, most recently, *Devil's Course*. They're all basically identical, but with different courses to play on. *Devil's Course* is certainly the weirdest – with ridiculous courses involving things like holes being right on top of unclimbable mountains, and so on.

PGA TOUR GOLF

UK Release

Game: PGA Tour Golf
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1-4 players
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

PGA Tour Golf has done the rounds on just about every console and computer there is, and the game has set the benchmark on all of them. Er, apart from the Super Nintendo. The SNES version isn't a bad game – it plays golf fine, and if you'd never seen it running on another machine you could easily live with it in blissful ignorance.



***PGA Tour Golf* has appeared on just about every game system on earth. How unfortunate, then, that ours should be the most half-baked of them all...**

But, while the other versions back up the actual mechanics with atmospheric graphics and slick presentaion, it all seems to go horribly wrong on the SNES. Jerky scrolling means it's best to avert your eyes when the ball's flying through the air, and the choice of colours just seems all wrong. And while the ball goes just where you'd expect it to, it makes an awful song and dance about it, juddering about most unrealistically. Hopefully *PGA Tour Golf 2* will put things right...

These scrolling pictures of the hole you're about to have a go at look nice – until you see them moving! They're not exactly smooth...

Here you are about to take a shot. As is traditional with these things, the power bar appears at the bottom.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
50%	45%	71%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
59%		60%

VERDICT: Oh dear. *PGA Tour Golf* is great on most other machines, except this one. Wait for *PGA 2*.

PILOTWINGS

UK Release

Game: Pilotwings
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Release: Out now
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

One of the very first Super Nintendo games (it was one of only two games to be released on the same day as the machine in Japan, the other being *Super Mario World*), *Pilotwings* is still one of the very best – not just for what it does (which is considerable), but for the unusual brilliance of the basic idea. The game was originally to have been called 'Flight Club', which perhaps gives more idea of what it's all about – this isn't a serious flight simulator in the style of all those high tech PC games, but a fun arcade romp based on the idea of flying. Set on a mysterous airstrip-covered island, it sets you a series of challenges (accurate parachute handling, hang gliding, rocket-pack controlling, biplane flying, helicopter gunship piloting – the only bit where you get to shoot things – and so on), each dealt with in a lightweight, but nevertheless very involving, manner.

Pilotwings is all about falling, unhindered, towards the ground at 80mph, timing the exact right moment ot pull your 'chute. It's about realising that the runway is going to run out before your biplane sets down, let alone pulls to a proper halt. It's about failing miserably to guide your jetpack through anything like its proper flight path. It's also about showcasing Mode 7 – the brilliantly effective, if rather flat, landscapes over which you fly would only be possible on the Super Nintendo. Indeed, so clever is the game technically, it also use a special DSP chip (see elsewhere in this magazine for more details on this) to further boost the graphic capabilities of the machine, and make the use of such detailed sprites over the top of Mode 7 possible.

A technical masterpiece, then, with the flight characteristics of each of the different bits of machinery featured effectively portrayed. It's a game you're unlikely ever to get bored with, too, and basically makes for a thoroughly good buy – it's as effective a way of selling the Super Nintendo now as it ever was, too, which is quite some recommendation, considering all the spectacular stuff we've seen since.

Come on, where's the fire button? This is boring! It's only in the later stages of the game that you actually get to shoot at anything, with this chopper.

UP, UP AND AWAY

Check out these codes for easy access to all the areas of the excellent *Pilotwings*:

Flight Area 2: 985206
Flight Area 3: 394391
Flight Area 4: 520771
Secret Command One: 108048
Flight Area 5: 400718
Flight Area 6: 773224
Flight Area 7: 165411
Flight Area 8: 760357
Secret Command Two: 882943

Good stuff, no? By the way, to access the game's bonus sections, you'll have to attempt a landing on the moving target with the rocket belt or the parachute. (Oh yes, and you'll have to achieve it too, of course.)

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91%	60%	93%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
92%		92%

VERDICT: A true classic and, despite its age, one of the most original, clever games on the system. Buy it!

Landing your little Red Baron-esque biplane (*Wasn't his a tri-plane? – Ed.*) on that distant runway can be tricky stuff, especially in high winds. The whole plane feel is handled very realistically, and that includes the crashes!

This parachuting stuff is much trickier than it looks – not only in steering the damn thing for a landing in the right spot, but in doing it without breaking your legs either! A special DSP chip was needed to combine sprites and Mode 7 in this way.

PITFIGHTER

UK Release

Game: Pitfighter
Publisher: THQ
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

PitFighter (the arcade machine) has one main thing going for it – the unusual graphics, which take digitised representations of real people and use them for each of the assorted fighters, giving the game a strange, semi-realistic feel. This basic look is brought across to the Super Nintendo fairly well, but unfortunately so are all the inherent faults of the game – crude, jerky animation, a severe lack of moves, hardly any options, no weapons or secret bits to collect and so on.

Two-player mode, as usual with these things, livens everything up a bit – but it is only a bit. The game is basically hopeless – all graphic novelty, but no substance. Avoid it with every ounce of strength in your body.

'Oof! You complete cad!' *PitFighter* will bring out the worst side of any player.

Digitised graphics? Yeah, right. Digitised from a television commercial for Lego, maybe.

'No! Please! Please don't make me play *PitFighter* again!' 'You'll play it, sonny, or else!'

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
15%	20%	16%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
12%		14%

VERDICT: That's the lowest score Super Play has ever given, and *PitFighter* deserves it. Crude, unplayable, and to be avoided with diligence.

POPULOUS

UK Release

Game: Populous
Publisher: Imagineer
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

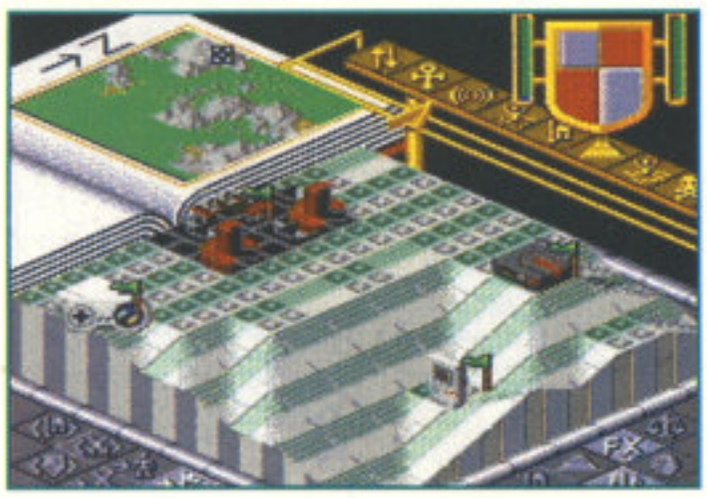
In *Populous* you get to play God. And this is just as much fun as it sounds. You're given a rocky, uninhabitable world, with a couple of people struggling to eke a living from it, and it's your job to assist them by smoothing out the land, giving them space to build huts, house, castles and eventually whole towns on. They'll multiply, and soon you'll have hundreds of little people running around the place.

The catch is that you're not alone. There's another God trying to do the same thing, beginning in the opposite corner of the map, and eventually your two populations will clash. The stronger side will eventually win, but you can assist your people by strategically employing 'natural' disasters like earthquakes and floods in enemy territory.

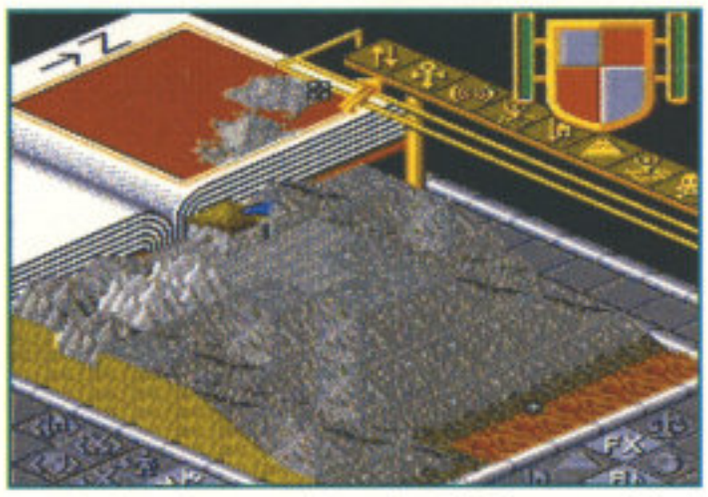
And, in the short to medium term, *Populous* is extremely addictive – the process of moulding the landscape seems strangely theraputic. You will find, though, that as you progress through its 1000 (1000!) levels the computer gets harder and harder to win against, and it all gets a bit frustrating and boring. More an executive toy than a proper game.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	78%	87%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
85%		85%

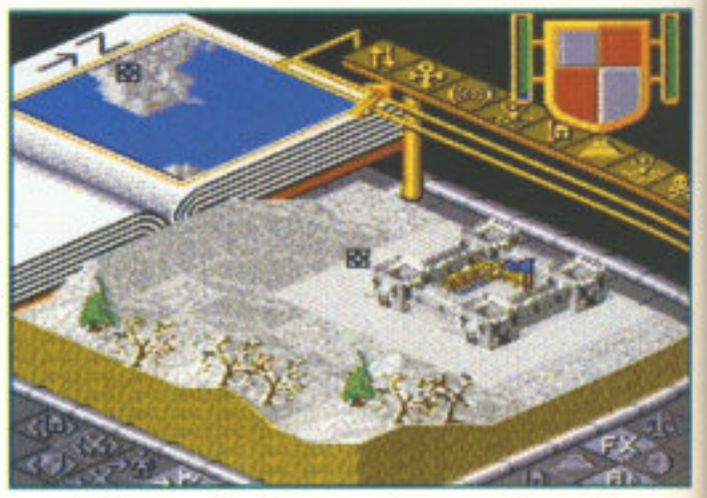
VERDICT: An old game, but one that's still lots of fun to play around with. You'll need one heck of a lot of patience to play it to the end, though.



The SNES version of *Populous* contains landscapes you won't have seen before, like the Bitplains, which are populated by NESes and Game Boys...



...and others that you will, such as this dangerously hot lava world (where you've got to be careful not to let people fall into the sea)...

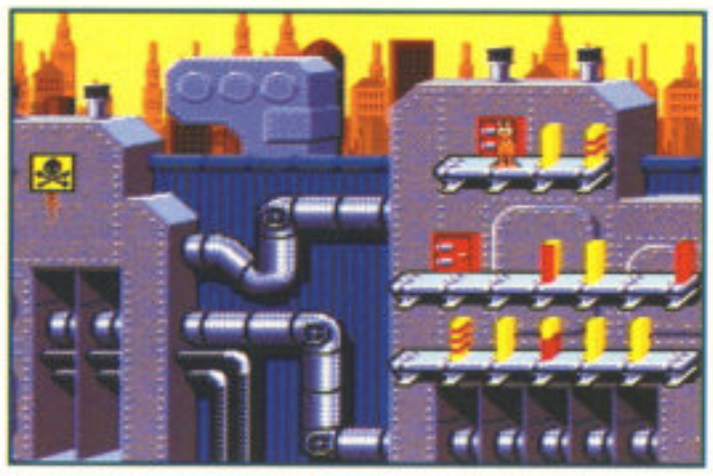


...and this snowy landscape, where people won't survive for long without a roof over their heads and a nice warm fire to snuggle up to.

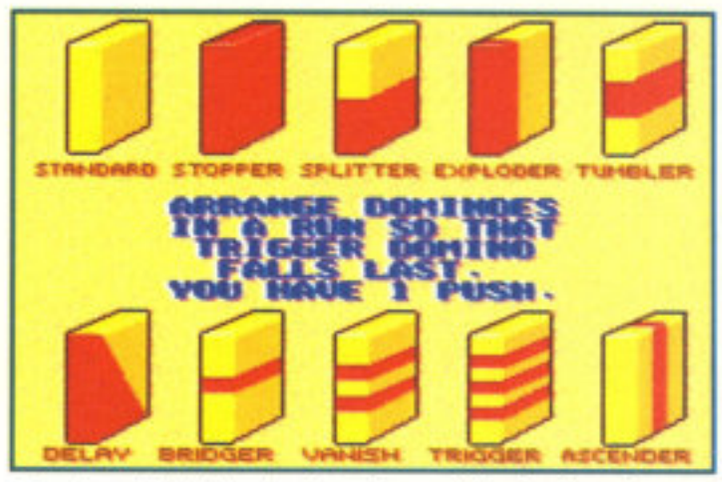
PUSHOVER

UK Release

Game: Pushover
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: Red Rat
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit



Here's an incredibly simple earlier level. In fact, you ought to be all right just giving that first domino a shove. Hopefully the triple-striped one should fall last.



This is probably the best way to explain what's going on. It's a list of all the different sorts of dominoes, with names about as self-explanatory as money can buy.

The best ideas for puzzle games are always the simplest ones, right? Like *Tetris*. Or, erm, dunno. Ocean certainly thought so when they first came up with the idea for *Pushover* – they based the game directly on the idea of those championship domino toppling contests you get on *Record Breakers*. Six months into the project or so, though, it seems their nerve broke – slowly but surely they started to complicate things, with special splitting-in-half dominoes, exploding ones, tumbling ones, vanishing ones and the like, presumably in the fear that their dominoes game was going to be too simple and, well, boring for most people.

The result makes for a suitably absorbing and entertaining game, but one with two major limitations – the fact that once you've done each level, you'll never want to go back to it being one (a limitation of all puzzle games), and the fact that there's no arcadey, reactions-based side to the game at all, just pure 100% puzzling. Combined, these could be enough to put some people off. That said, we're fond of it – it's well designed and coded, and thoroughly absorbing.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	80%	85%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	78%
70%		

VERDICT: A puzzle game in it's purest form. It'll keep you going for ages, though it's appeal once you've solved all the puzzles is questionable.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

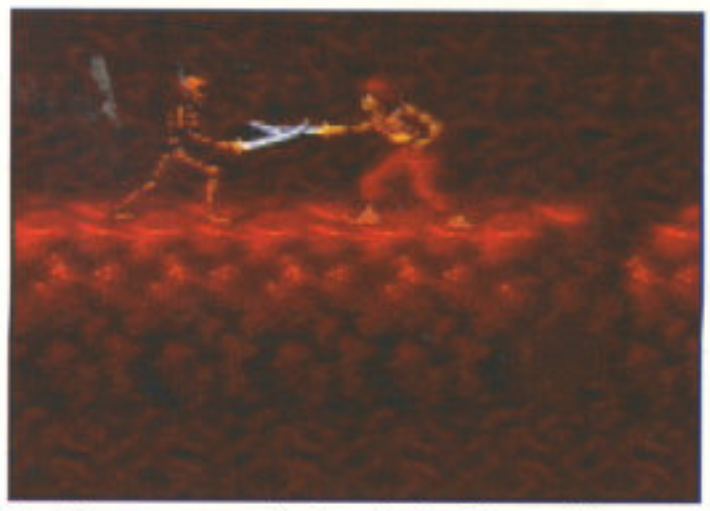
UK Release

Game: Prince of Persia
Publisher: Konami
Developer: NCS
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The danger with *Prince Of Persia* is that it's so easy to look at it and think, 'Hmm, the sprite's really well-animated, but I doubt the gameplay's up to much.'

And that sprite really is a delight to behold. He runs about, jumps and swordfights almost as if there's a real, live *Prince of Persia* inside your Super Nintendo. Only there couldn't be, because he does the most impossibly athletic things – leaping off a wall, dropping down several storeys, saving himself from death-by-spiking by grabbing onto the edge of a platform with his fingertips, hauling himself up into terra firma and then clambering back up to the top again in a manner that would exhaust even the fittest Russian acrobat. And all the while he's coming up with frame after frame of the most exquisite animation. (Although it's a bit annoying the way he insists on following through every sequence to the bitter end – even something as simple as taking a step forward – even if you change your mind halfway though.)

But don't dismiss *Prince of Persia* as merely a graphical set-piece. It's a large, challenging and pleasantly tense game into the bargain. Each of its twenty levels is massive and tough, and completing one of them is the equivalent of polishing off many a smaller game. *Success will require* precision jumping skills, a good head for puzzles and an almost supernatural ability to predict and avoid booby traps.



Skeletons are among the tougher baddies you'll have to fight. The trick is, if possible, to force them towards and over the edge of a precipice – they never realise.

POP CODES

Well, here are some codes. They don't cover all the levels, but they might be handy if you're irrevocably stuck in one bit.

VGP+LZ2
ZRMFLDV
4T7+2PV

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	85%	91%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	89%
90%		

VERDICT: Not only does it look fantastic, but *Prince of Persia* is a big, tough, atmospheric game that'll give you weeks of playing time.

RACE DRIVIN'

UK Release

Game: Race Drivin'
Publisher: THQ
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Want to see what Super Nintendo 3D graphics looked like before *Starwing*, and the Super FX chip? *Race Drivin'* is the ideal showcase – a slow, jerky, crude looking mess of a game – and as such far from ideal for any other purpose, including playing it. To be fair, the gameplay – a 3D into-the-screen driving thing, featuring a neat Stunt course (ramps, loop-the-loops etc) – holds up OK if you can ignore the graphics side of things (pretty tricky), while the as-if-taken-by-a-roadside-camera Instant Replays of your crashes are always a good laugh for a while. The gear-change controls are awful, though (always pick an automatic car), the limited number of courses (three) give it only short term appeal, and then there are those graphics – so useless for the task in hand that we just have to mention them again. It's a bit of a joke, and a game that time has very convincingly passed by.

Though the graphics look fine in this still screen, you only have to see it moving to realise what a joke they are. The actual area that's animated is only tiny too.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
25%	31%	52%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	35%
22%		

VERDICT: Terrible, terrible 3D completely ruins what is a simple, but fun, arcade game. Avoid like crazy!

RIVAL TURF

UK Release

Game: Rival Turf
Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

***Rival Turf* has nothing over *Final Fight* – except for a neat two player mode. Like most game-styles, beat-'em-ups are always more fun with a friend.**

If you're in the habit of starting at page one and taking it from there, you'll already have read the bit about *Final Fight*, and discovered it to be the best scrolling beat-'em-up on the Super Nintendo. And you're probably not holding up much hope for *Rival Turf*.

Your pessimism is fitting. *Rival Turf* plays second fiddle in just about every respect to the game that few would deny inspired it. The graphics are worse (though still reasonably good), the animation isn't as good, the range of moves isn't as wide, nor that of the baddies available to beat up, and even a sworn scrolling beat-'em-up supporter would have to admit that *Rival Turf* gets boring extremely quickly.

What it does have, though, that *Final Fight* doesn't – and which helps to keep boredom at bay for a little bit longer – is a two-player mode. This is, of course, great fun for a limited amount of time, as these things always are, but we still can't in all honestly recommend it.

Occasionally *Rival Turf* mAnages to cough up an interesting background, like this pretty train section.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
76%	69%	70%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	58%
65%		

VERDICT: *Rival Turf*'s redeeming feature is its two-player mode, but otherwise this is a very average beat-'em-up.

ROAD RIOT 4WD

The split-screen effect for two players is right, but everything else about *Road Riot 4WD* goes horribly, horribly wrong. You only have to see it in action to tell.

Hey! Looks like you've won something. This still screen is really only of average quality, but unfortunately it's as good looking as the game gets.

UK Release

Game: Road Riot 4WD
Publisher: THQ
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

The idea of *Road Riot* is good – neat little beach buggy things, bouncing around very uppy-downy tracks, with a neat split screen two-player mode – but as soon as we get into the execution of the game, things quickly start to go horribly, horribly wrong. For a start, the rolling road is crap – a jerky, confusing mess of 3D shapes that would have shamed an ST back in 1987 or so. The difficultry curve is almost non-existent, while unappealing characters, awful speech and a nasty feel conspire to mess the whole thing up a treat. It's far too easy to win too. Without a doubt, the worst driving game on the Super Nintendo, bar none.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
25%	42%	23%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	20%
16%		

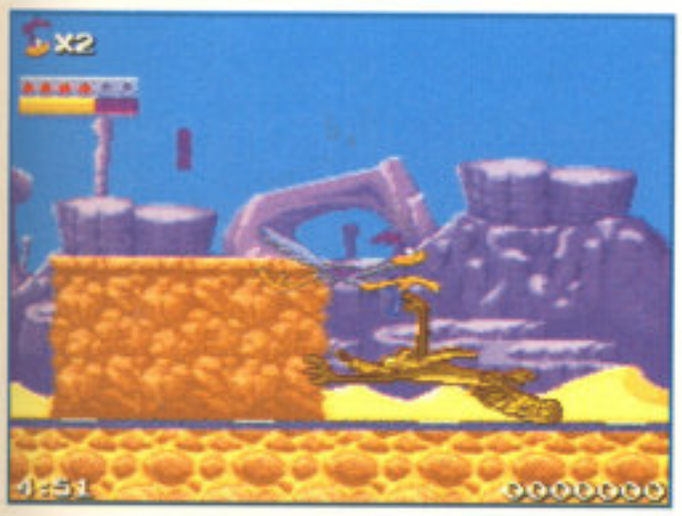
VERDICT: Terrible in just about every possible way – this is a contender for the worst game in this mag.

ROAD RUNNER

UK Release

Game: Looney Toons Road Runner
Publisher: Sunsoft
Developer: Icon Simulations
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

We love the *Road Runner* cartoons, so you'd think this game would get the big thumbs up – after all, it looks exactly right (in the same way that *Buster Busts Loose* looks completely right), and is packed with brilliantly funny little cartoony joke bits. Every level, Wile E Coyote tries some devious new way to catch the *Road Runner* (crush him with a road-roller, bomb him with a remote control plane), and every time it goes horribly wrong, with the Road Runner turning the tables, and Wile becoming the victim of his own trap. Brilliant!



The great thing abour *Road Runner* is that it really, really does look just like a cartoon. Just check out those sprites, and those backgrounds – perfect!

The animation's great too –especially the bits where Wile's about to die. This one's nice, but the best one's where he falls of a cliff. (You really have to see it.)

Wile resorts to more and more convoluted ways to get the Road Runner as the game progresses. Here a steam roller conspicuously fails to do the business.

So what the low mark? Unfortunately, the good looks are totally let down by the awful gameplay – this is the simplest sort of platform thing, but one with horrible inertia-overladen controls (meaning Road Runner almost always overshoots the platform he's aimed for, skidding and floating all over the place), and the sort of gameplay that is often seems simply unfair. What a shame.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88%	79%	29%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	42%
45%		

VERDICT: A great looking cartoon-style platform game ruined by hopelessly unfair gameplay. Simply annoying.

UK Release

Game: Robocop 3
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

ROBO 3

About all *Robocop 3*'s got going for it is a good feel for the film licence. But even that only extends about as far as the Robocop sprite itself, which stomps about quite convincingly. While admitedly the *Robocop* films majored on violence, even they made some attempt to extend beyond a simple exchange of bullets.

Ocean's game doesn't, though. The scenery scrolls serenely past, baddies fire their guns out of windows, and Robocop fires back. This rapidly gets boring. It's also extremely difficult. Robocop himself is too slow and plodding to have a hope of avoiding most of the bullets that come towards him and, although there are enough power-ups lying around to see you through the game if you keep your wits about you, the fact that you get sent right back to the beginning of a level each time you die tips the whole thing into a chasm of frustration. (*Eh? – Ed.*)

Don't be fooled by the surface good looks with this one. It's basically boring, and much too difficult.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
74%	78%	54%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
58%		66%

VERDICT: Decent enough looks-wise, but basically a plodding– and far too unforgiving – affair. Unimpressive.

WHITHER ROBOCOP 3?

You might have thought, hang on a minute – *Robocop 3*? The last film I remember was *Robo 2*. And you'd be right. You see, *Robocop 3* (the film) has been made, but never released over here – it got caught up in the quagmire of the collapse of its maker, Orion films, and is only just escaping. Whether it'll now receive a cinema release, though, isn't clear – despite being scripted by comics god Frank Miller (*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* etc) the movie is reputed to be lousy, and may go straight into video hell.

UK Release

Game: Sim City
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Maxis
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit+BB

SIM CITY

Yes, yes – seemingly random splodges of colour hardly *look* like the stuff great games are made of. Anyone who's played *SC*, however, knows how wrong that is.

No matter how objective you might strive to be, you'll never convince yourself to invest in a copy of *Sim City* on the strength of our pictures of it. It looks horribly boring, doesn't it? But *Sim City* never looks good on paper. You've got to play it to realise just how addictive it is.

Those funny looking blocky things are actualy buildings – houses, offices, factories, police stations, everything you might expect to find in a real life city. And what you've got to do is arrange them all as efficiently as possible, linking them up with a transport network, and making sure they're all connected up to an electricity supply and everything. The idea is that little people are living and working in them, and, if they're kept happy, the taxes they produce will pay for more and more bits of city.

And it really, honestly, isn't as boring as it sounds. This is one of those bizarrely compulsive games that completely takes over your life – you can go on gradually adding bits to your city for hours and days and weeks and think nothing of the time you're wasting. Suspend your disbelief, and it really is like having millions of little people living inside your console – people whose lives you can manipulate at your pleasure. Drop a giant monster into the middle of town, sack the entire police force, or burn the whole place down and see how they cope with that – the limits really are (lame as it may sound) those of your own imagination.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	90%	89%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
82%		84%

VERDICT: Okay, okay – so it hardly looks the most exciting thing in the world. It *is*, though, if you give it a chance.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO MAXIS..?

Oddly, although Maxis struck gold with *Sim City* on just about every format under the sun, for some reason they've never quite managed to pull it off since. *Sim Earth* and *Sim Ant*, both only available on import as yet, are really dull games. One hit wonders? Let's hope not...

SPIDERMAN & THE X-MEN

IN ARCADE'S REVENGE

Long-time Marvel favourites Spiderman and the X-Men are just about the two hottest properties in comics at the moment, so a game based on them just can't lose, right? Not in sales terms, that's for sure.

Actually, you'd really be pretty churlish to say it loses as a game too – after all, it's commendably faithful to the comic originals (more or less), and pretty hard (you won't finish it in a hurry). The problem is, the whole game is somehow just slightly uninspired throughout, to the extent that it can easily become (whisper it) boring. Graphics are servicable rather than spectacular (with far too many murky backdrops, and only average animation), while gameplay makes disappointingly little of each heroes abilities. (The flying, weather-controlling X-Man Storm, for instance, is placed in a completely unsuitable underwater section.)

Still, it does have it's good bits, and for the sake of fairness we thought we'd list them: Spidey's spidersense makes a 'pleasingly' radioactive sort of a noise; the semi-psychotic Wolverine can pop his claws in and out of his hands at will; assorted supervillains (including the giant robotic Sentinels and the next to unstoppable Juggernaut) make nifty cameo appearances; the music and sound are superb throughout. Unfortunately, none of these are enough to stop the game from simply dragging a bit (and graphics that are only alrightish don't help).

UK Release

Game: Arcade's Revenge
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Software creations
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

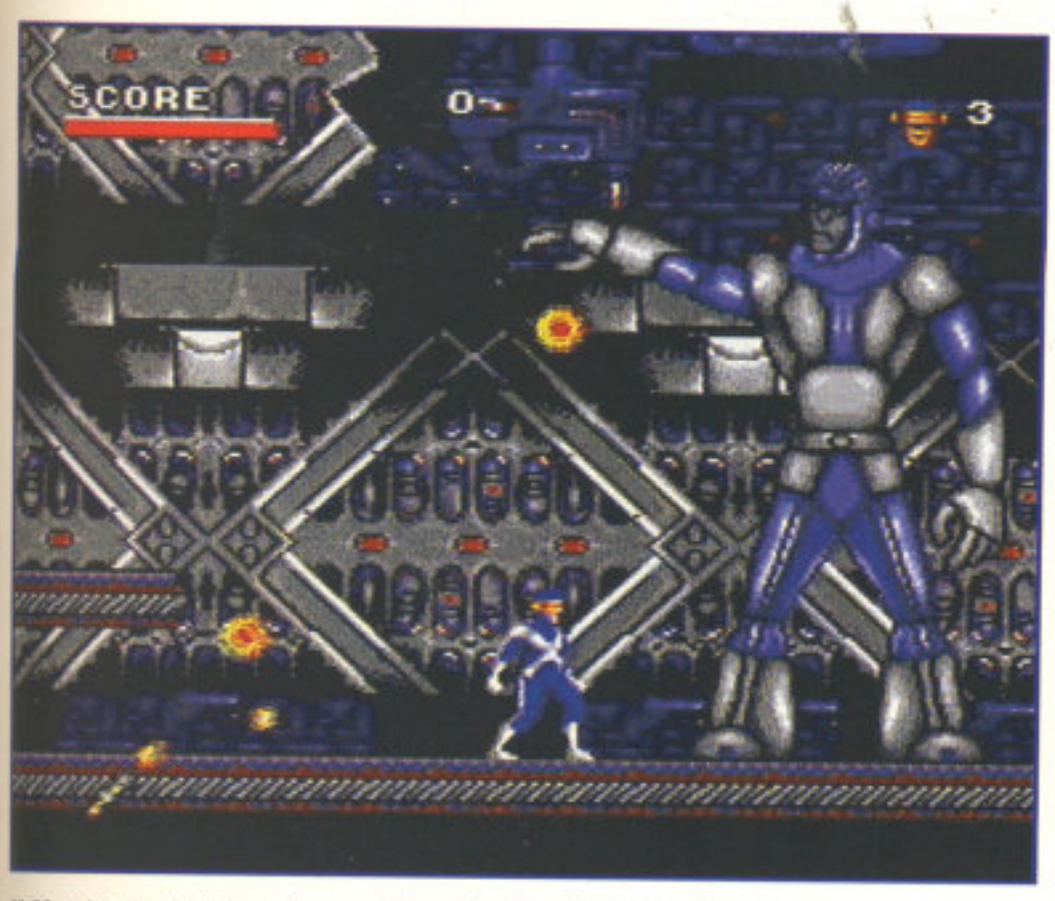
Uh-oh! Looks like the evil, revenge-twisted Arcade has captured our X-Men buddies, and only good old Spidey can rescue them! This is a shot from the intro sequence.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
64%	85%	70%
GAMELIFE 76%	OVERALL SCORE:	72%

VERDICT: Reasonably large, hard, and well done, but not as exciting as comic fans would hope for.

IT'S A TOUGH GAME...

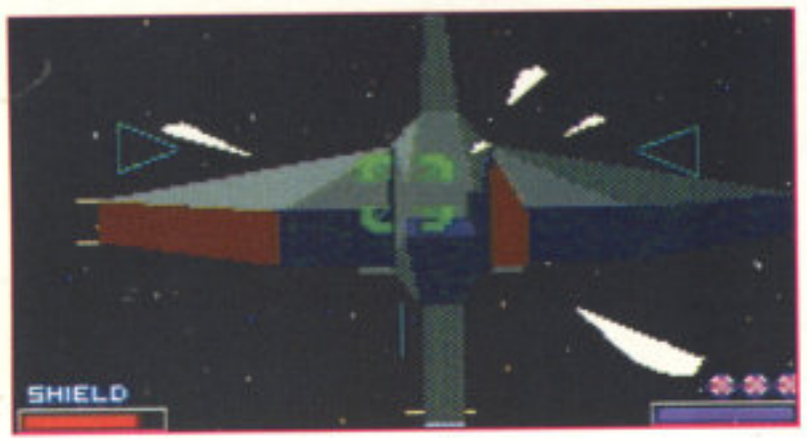
...but not so tough that a little Action Replay help won't sort you out! Unlimited lives are the answer here, we think you'll find, and they're easily got too. Just try this: 7E01 0003



X-Men leader Cyclops faces off against a giant Sentinel robot, a classic bad guy from the comics. Watch out for those fireballs, Cyke!

ABOVE THE CITY STREETS....
FIRST CYCLOPS, THEN STORM AND WOLVERINE...
I JUST HOPE I'M NOT TOO LA
GAMBIT!! LOOKOUT!
...ARCADE!! I HAVE TO GO AFTER THEM.
GNARRR-SFIANG!
THE LIVES OF THE X-MEN DEPEND ON ME!

This neat comic-style intro sequence kicks off the game, as Spidey discovers just what Arcade has done with his mutant superhero buddies.



STAR

UK Release

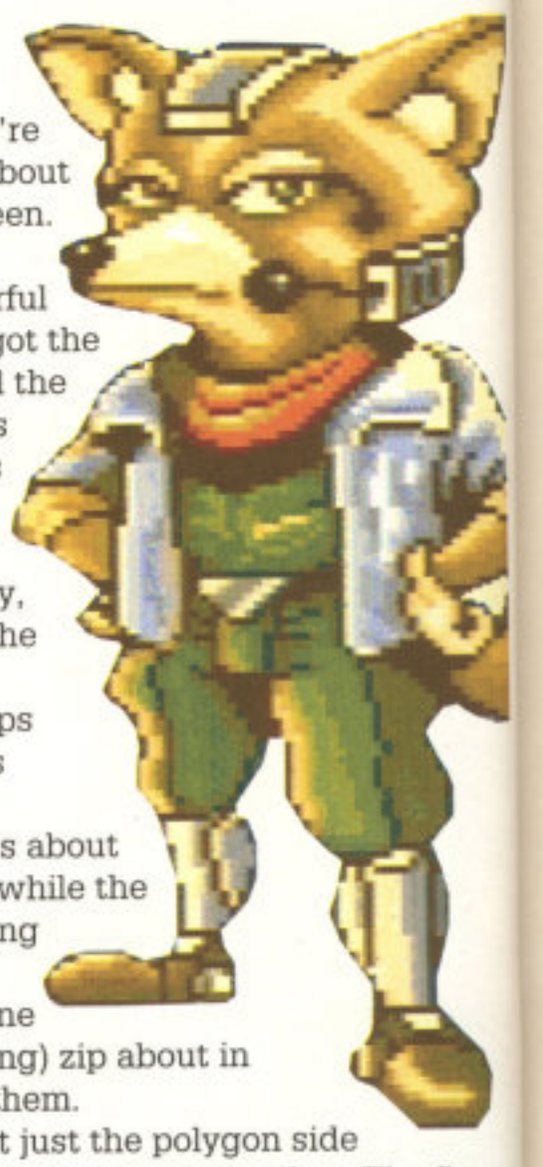
Game: Starwing
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Argonaut/Nintendo
Price: £49.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Starwing? Of course you've heard of *Starwing*. What? Come along now – you know. *Starwing*. S-T-A-R-W-I-N-G. *Starwing. Starwing. St...*

Ah, hang on. Does this sound any more familiar – *Starfox*. (Click!) Thought so. (*Oh good grief – Ed.*) You see, Nintendo, in their infinite wisdom, and despite the massive amount of publicity that surrounded its launch in the US and Japan, decided to rename *Starfox* 'Starwing' for the European market. Something to do with there already being a game called 'Starfox' over here (albeit a really old, obscure one). So every time you see us mention 'Starwing' from now on you'll have somehow to mentally substitute it with 'Starfox', which sounds a lot more exciting.

So you will, in fact, have heard of *Starwing*, and you'll also doubtless have heard that it's the first Super Nintendo game to incorporate the brand new Super FX chip (which you can read all about on page 12). And you'll also have heard rumours of incredibly fast 3D graphics and massive explosions.

Well, it's all true! While *Starwing*'s graphics look impressive enough on paper – just take a gander at the pictures scattered about these pages for proof – they're absolutely staggeringly, astoundingly amazing when they're spinning about on the screen. Smooth, fast, colourful – they've got the lot. And all the spaceships and things behave really realistically, too, with the huge motherships and things heaving themselves about weightily while the little Arwing fighters (like the one you're flying) zip about in between them.

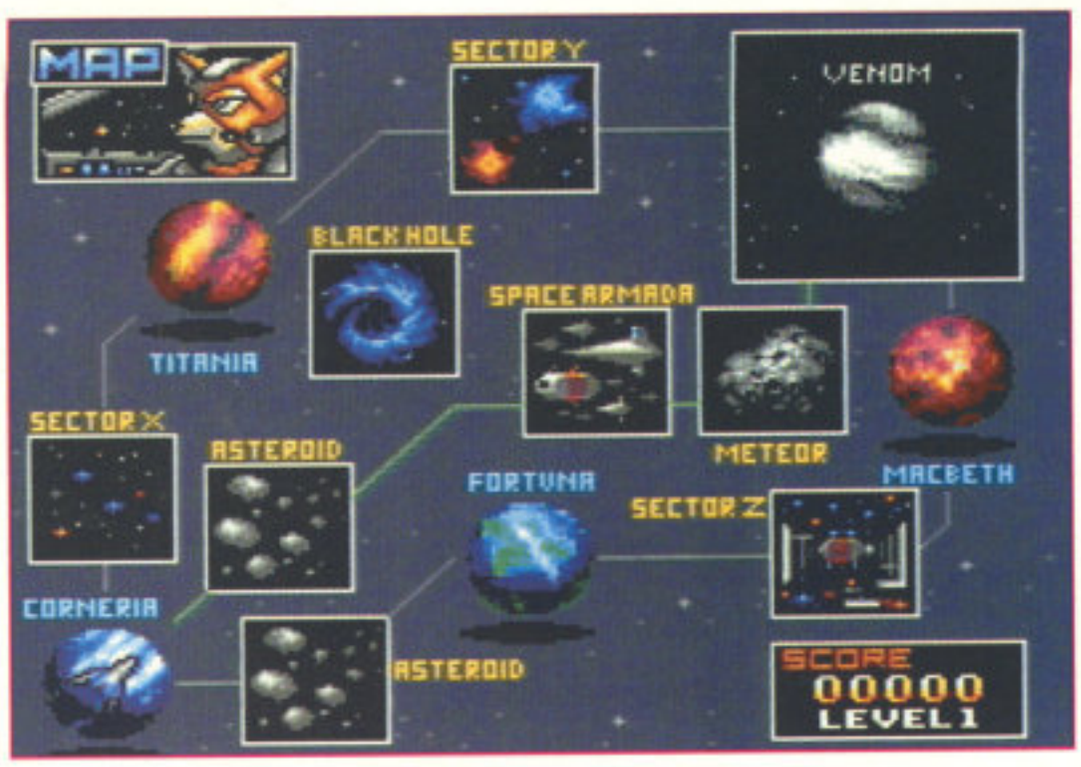


It's not just the polygon side of things that impresses, either. The Super FX chip allows for sprite scaling and rotation, and the facility is used to devastating effect to produce the best-looking explosions yet seen on the SNES. Witness, too, the terrific cube-shaped boss right at the end of the game. The other great thing about the graphics is the backgrounds, which call upon the relatively old-hat Mode 7 to provide some spooky cloud effects.

OUT OF THIS DIMENSION

While everyone's heard of the Black Hole (see next page), what loads of people don't know is that if you go to the Asteroid Belt on level three and keep shooting the second large asteroid till it explodes, an egg will fly out and a bird will hatch out of it. Fly into that and you'll be whisked to a bonus level with a fruit machine in it. You'll be able to play on it to your heart's content. (Or, at least, until you get three identical symbols.)

***Starwing*'s graphics form a cunning union between Super FX chip trickery and the SNES's built in Mode 7 facilities to produce great effects like this storm.**



Examine this map closely and you'll see there are actually three alternative routes to the end of the game. (You choose one at the start.) And that's the beauty of *Starwing*: once you've completed it one way you've still got two completely different ways to try.

Look at that map even more closely and you'll spot that there's a Black Hole, with no apparent means of reaching it. Well, here it is! And it's hell, with baddies hurtling towards you and horrible warp bits. (And how d'you get there? Check the other page.)

STARWING

***Starwing*'s first level is one of its hairiest – you're flying along inches from the ground at incredible speed. There are bonus points and stuff for flying through the hoops.**

Okay, okay, so the graphics are simply the best. But what's it all about? And is it worth getting? Well, the answer to both questions is a resounding 'Yes!'.

(*Eh? – Ed.*)

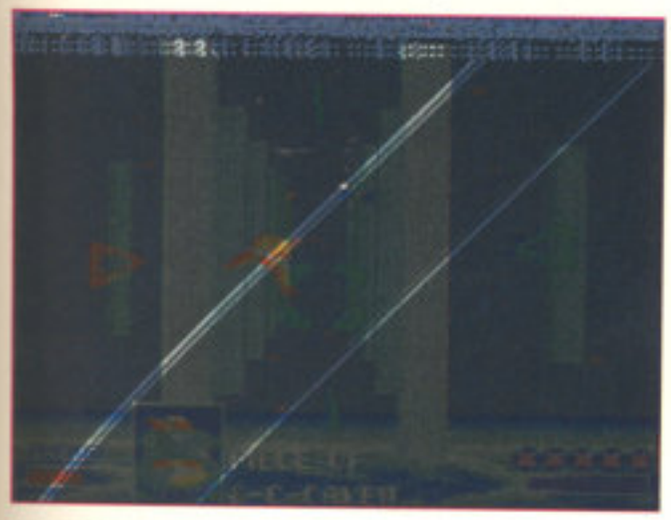
Er, just a minute. The answer to the second question is 'Yes!'. *Starwing* is worth buying all right. But the answer to the first question is that you're actually Fox McCloud, leader of a crack squadron of pilots. (The others are a hare called Peppy, a toad called Slippy and a hawk called Falco.) And you're on a hazardous mission to penetrate planet Venom, the inhabitants of which are making a devil of a mess of Corneria, your home planet. Doing this involves flying through a series of stages, sometimes inches above the ground, sometimes weaving between asteroids, always with baddies flying past on all sides. You control Fox's ship, and Peppy, Slippy and Falco will provide assistance (although you might need to help them out from time to time – this is a game with a rare sense of camaraderie).

But – and here's the good bit – there are actually three different routes you can take to the end of the game: an easy route, a sort of middling route, and a really, really hard route. Have a look at the map and you'll see what we mean. So even if you complete the game the easy way, you've still got the other two ways to try, and the hard way will take you ages. And even then, the game's such terrific fun that you'll come back to it again and again. (And again, probably.)

So there we are, then. *Starwing*'s a Nintendo game through and through. It's got the best graphics on the Super NES, it's a cracking play, and it's got some really good music and sound effects, too. (Which we were going to mention earlier, but sort of forgot. There's all sorts of speech, and some tremendously exciting music along the lines of *Star Wars*.) Three cheers for the Super FX chip!

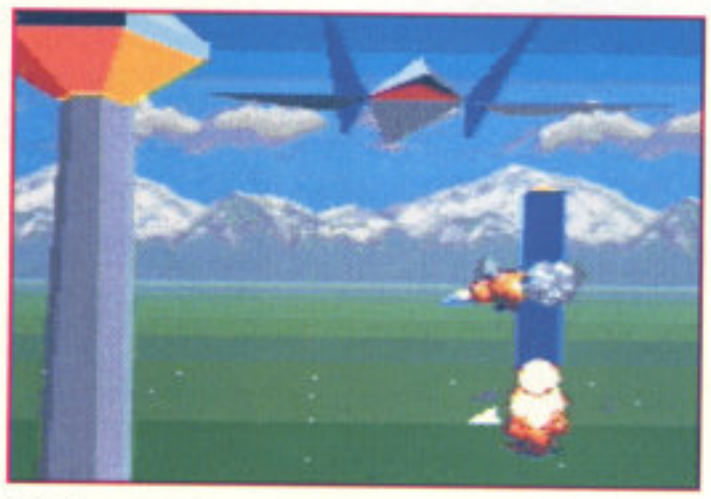
THE BLACK HOLE

Probably *Starwing's* least secret secret is the Black Hole, a place that everyone's heard of (it's right there on the map) but only a few know how to reach. Well, what you've got to do is rummage about in the Asteroid Belt on level one until you find five asteroids in a row, with an orange one in the middle. Crash into the orange one, and then do the same with the next two rows of five. Behold! An asteroid with a face on it appears, into which you can fly to take you to the Black Hole.

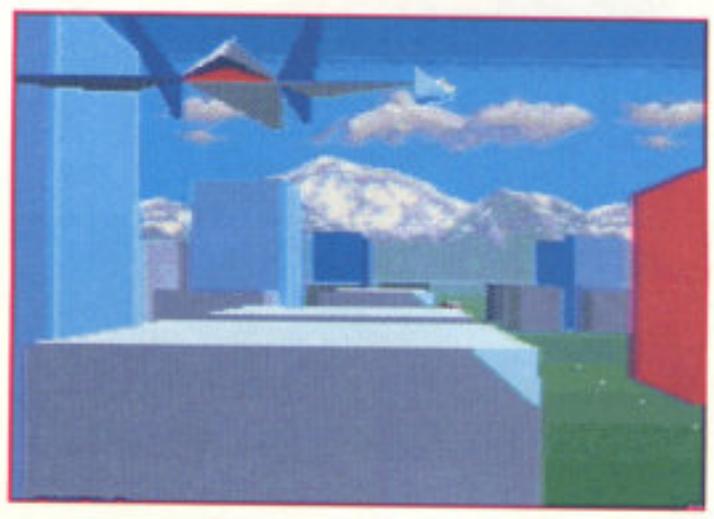


Woah! Gigantic floating columns! Space seems to be getting awfully cluttered these days, although Slippy still seems pretty sure of himself.

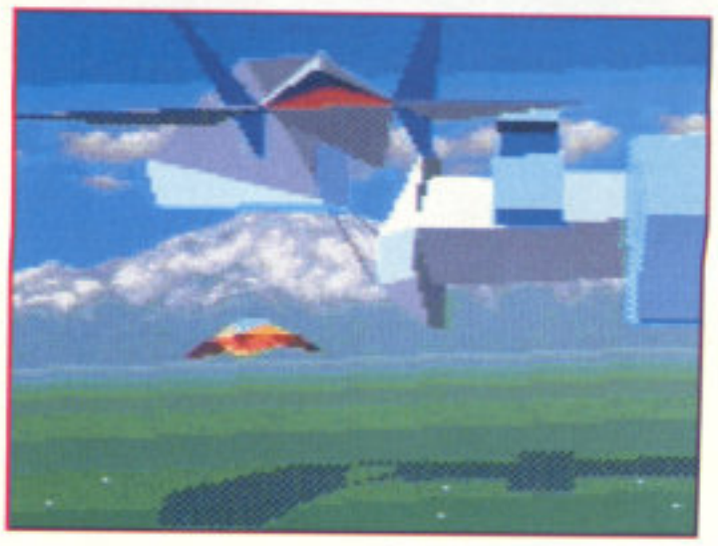
Goodness knows why Slippy's so confident, though – he keep getting himself into trouble, and you keep having to help him out. At least he's grateful.



Watch out for those tall blue things, which have a habit of toppling over as you're flying past. (Meanwhile, another baddy crashes and burns.)



If you're completely mad, you can try skimming over the tops of buildings, or even flipping your ship onto its side and slipping between them (like James Bond).



And here's the end-of-level boss, a gigantic mothership-type thing which you've got to gradually whittle away by firing at the red and yellow flashing bits.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93%	92%	92%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	93%
87%		

VERDICT: A stunning shoot-'em-up, and a convincing demonstration of what we can expect from the Super FX chip.

TAKE HOME A REAL, CUDDLY STARFOX!

Well, you can't, actually. Not yet, anyway. But given that Japan's merchandising industry has come up with cuddly *Street Fighter II* figures and a cuddly Mario, a set of squidgy *Starwing* figures seems almost a certainty.

Zangief, the giant Russian wrestler, is one of the slower, more lumbering, characters in the game, but once he's got you in a bear-hug you'll have little chance of escape. Strike him hard and fast, like this, though, and you should be OK.

This shot, too, features Ryu – one of the most popular characters in the game for most players. Here he connects with a great flying kick to the mush of the fairly evenly matched (and pretty fast) Ken, another popular favourite.

STREET FIGHTER II

UK Release

Game: Street Fighter II
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £64.99
Players: 1or 2 simultaneous
Cart ROM: 16 Mbit

It's quite hard knowing where to start this one. What can you say about *the* game on Super Nintendo – the one that's captured the imagination of the world, almost singlehandedly sold machines by the thousand, and still has enough depth to keep real experts coming back with new tactics? We could keep it short – saying simply that if you've got a Super Nintendo, but you don't have this, you want your head examining. Or we could go into the game in great depth, looking at the characters, some of the tactics, and everything else there is to know. The only danger with that, though, is that to really do *SFII* justice would take ten or so pages – ten or so pages we just don't have. Inevitably, it looks like we're going to be taking something of the middle line...

Here's one of the reasons both Ken and Ryu are such popular characters – they have these long range fireball attacks, as well as their more normal kung fu-based fighting moves. Other characters with long range attacks include Guile and Dhalsim, though theirs take different forms. Fireballs are dodgeable, of course – but it ain't easy. Indeed, getting complete mastery of *all* the fighting movies in *Street Fighter II* takes time — and forms part of the game's appeal. The more you play *SFII*, the better you like it.

Chun Li (the self-styled 'strongest woman in the world') shows off her 'hundred foot kick', zapping out mini-fireballs towards the ex-marine character, Guile.

Honda and Guile have a mid-air clash on Guile's airport stage. Guile is one of the toughest characters, and a popular choice for inexperienced players.

First off (and assuming you've just arrived from Mars or somewhere, and really do know nothing about the game at all), *Street Fighter II* is based on Capcom's massive arcade smash hit coin-op of the same name, the remarkable thing about the Super Nintendo conversion being that it manages to keep so close to the arcade original, both in looks and in gameplay. There's rarely been a coin-op conversion this close before.

The coin-op was, of course, the sequel to the original *Street Fighter* arcade machine of a few years back – that too was a beat-'em-up, but beyond that the similarities are few. Most of the characters, and almost all the gameplay, for *SFII* was new – indeed, the hero (ie the character you controlled) of the first *Street Fighter*, Sagat, appears as a baddy in the new game, emphasising how much has changed as well as anything.

The format of *Street Fighter II* is simple – you pick a character to control from a choice of eight colourful heroes from around the world, then work your way through a series of bouts against them, eventually working your way to three bosses, and the final end-of-game boss M. Bison. Where the game really comes into its own, though is in head-to-head two player mode. Not only is the animation remarkable, but each character has a wide range of fighting moves, all with his/her own strengths and weaknesses – with a few exceptions, they're all well matched too, many of the characters being able to effectively counter the others aggressive moves, if only the player controlling him knows how to do it. It's the sheer range of the moves, and the difficulty of accessing many of them, that has proved the game's long term strength – it's caught imaginations across the world precisely because it rewards perseverance with the controls so well. It's a game that you'd be hard pushed to bring to many computers or consoles, of course, simply because the controls are so hard to access (thank goodness for the multitude of buttons on the standard SNES controller), though that doesn't mean that a healthy aftermarket hasn't grown up in specialist *Street Fighter II* joyboards, to enable real fans to recreate the arcade experience as closely as possible in their own homes.

Of course, the wide range of moves isn't the game's only strength. For a start, there's the sheer range and beauty of the backdrops – each character having his distinctive own stage, where he hosts battles against the others. Chun Li's is a sort of Chinese street affair, with a couple of cyclists in the background, while the sumo wrestler Edmund Honda has a sort of Mount Fuji-and-Japanese-sun thing. Things like the (often hilarious) animation of the background characters, the different layers of parallax scrolling, and the perspective scaling on the floors, have been reproduced from the arcade original almost perfectly, and with slowdown hardly ever rearing its ugly head at all. Perhaps the only real downside looks-wise are the thick black borders at the top and bottom of the screen – these are noticeable on the imported NTSC copies of the game, but even worse on the official UK one. Still, as usual, if you don't know what you're missing, it's unlikely to fuss you that much.

E Honda, the giant sumo wrestler, leaps above Ken's fireball. All the backdrops in the game are great, but this is one of the prettiest of them all.

Indeed, the only real downside is the outragous price of the UK version – when you can get an import version from America or Japan for £50 or less, £65 is ludicrous – it just sounds plain greedy. (That said, it hasn't hurt UK sales in any obvious way – presumably most people just don't realise the savings they could make by shopping around.) When all's said and done, though, *Street Fighter II* is an exceptional game – and a must have. You only need to look at the number of (mainly hopeless) imitators that have cropped up over the last year to see how very influential it is. Until *SFII Turbo* arrives, it's best beat-'em-up there is.

THE BEST STREET FIGHTER II CHEAT OF THEM ALL!

One of the most annoying things about *SFII* can be when your rival picks your favourite character, forcing you to make do with one of the other ones. Well, fret no more – it's actually possible to do the arcade *Champion Edition*-only 'character vs same character' trick on a normal SNES copy of *Street Fighter II*. Here's how:

When the word 'Capcom' appears on the screen at the beginning of the game, quickly press these buttons: Down, R button, Up, L button, Y, B, X, A. If that doesn't work, try: Down, R button, Up, L button, Y, B. The game should make a little beep, the screen goes blue (instead of black), and you'll get a character vs character game – the only difference will be that one of the characters will be in a different colour scheme to tell them apart.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94%	88%	94%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	94%
93%		

VERDICT: Simply the best known game on the machine, and arguably the *best*, *SFII* is a must-have for any Super Nintendo owner.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF STREET FIGHTER II

Who, then, are the 'World Warriors' of *Street Fighter II*, and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

Ryu & Ken
These two broadly similar characters tend to be the favourites for most serious *Street Fighter II* players. Their tricks and tactics are more or less the same, though Ken's double throw can give him an advantage in a head-to-head match. Here are their best combination moves.

Special moves
Dragon Punch
Fireball
Hurricane Kick

Combo 1: Jump in with a hard kick, trying to get it below the neck. Follow this up with a medium sweep, then finish with a Fireball. This all has to be done fast and smoothly to prevent your opponent from getting a chance to counter.

Combo 2: Jump in with a hard punch, then deliver an uppercut followed by a Fireball.

Combo 3: Get in close, use a strong punch, then a Dragon Punch immediately afterwards. This can be devastating if done right.

Master Combo: Jump in with a hard punch, then deliver a Fireball – your opponent will almost certainly try and jump out of the way, at which point you can finish him with a Dragon Punch.

E Honda
The oversized sumo wrestler character is a bit slow, and has few combos, though they *are* easy to execute.

Special moves
Sumo headbutt
Hundred hand slap

Combo 1: Jump in with a bellyflop, followed by a medium squat kick and then finish with a Sumo Headbutt.

Combo 2: Fly in with a Headbutt, then a slap, then finish them off with a Hundred Hand Slap.

Combo 3: Jump in with a hard kick, then try a double-hit hard kick straight afterwards.

Master Combo: Try a bear hug, then, upon release, smash your opponent with a Hundred Hand Slap, followed by a Headbutt.

Zangief
Though very strong, the slow Zangief is one of the least useful of the World Warriors.

Special moves
Double Lariat
Spinning Clothesline
Spinning Piledriver

Combo 1: Jump in and kick, following up with a crouch kick and finished with a Piledriver.

Combo 2: Try a body dive, followed by a double-hit power kick. (Like we said, his moves aren't hard to do.)

Combo 3: Leap towards your opponent with a fierce punch, then duck and use a strong slap to the stomach. Finish with a ducking roundhouse.

Master Combo: Jump in with a kick, follow up with a face press, then release your opponent and move in with a Double Lariat.

Chun Li
The fastest of the World Warriors, Chun Li has plenty of easy-to-execute combos, making her one of the best choices for inexperienced players.

Special moves
Spinning Bird Kick
Hundred Foot Kick

Combo 1: Jump in with a powerful kick, followed by a standing weak kick, then finish with a medium kick delivered from a squat.

Combo 2: Try a weak squat punch, stand for a strong punch, then hard kick as you jump forward. If your opponent isn't stunned yet, try and finish with a throw.

Combo 3: Jump in with a hard punch, squat with a hard punch, then finish with a Spinning Bird Kick.

Master Combo: Try a series of mid-air stomps, then land and go straight into a Hundred Foot Kick. You now have a choice: either try a throw (if you're feeling daring) or, more safely, a hard squat kick. Both can be devastating, however, if pulled off.

Blanka
Blanka, a sort of bizarre half-man, half-monster affair, is fast, strong and easy to control – a good character, basically.

Special moves
Cannonball
Thundestorm

Combo 1: Use a double-hit knee attack, then hit punch to produce a Neck Bite – simple, but effective.

Combo 2: Jump in with a hard kick, followed by a Double Head Butt. Use a Cannonball to finish off.

Combo 3: Try a neck bite, followed by a Thunderstorm to fry your opponent as soon as he's released.

Combo 4: Approach your opponent, using the double-hit claw spin. Follow with a low, long-range power punch, and finish with a Cannonball.

Master Combo: This is not only effective, it's easy to execute too – the perfect combination. Jump in with either the powerful punch or medium kick, then follow with a squatting medium kick, and finally a Cannonball.

Dhalsim
The bendy Indian mystic is mainly a long-range attacker, but he does have a couple of nifty combos up his (extra long) sleeves.

Special moves
Yoga Fire
Yoga Flame

Combo 1: Use the Yoga foot spear, then land a double headbutt on your attacker.

Combo 2: Use Yoga Fire, then follow up with a long-range power punch. Finally, use your slide technique (a bit tricky this, but it works very well with practice) to get right up next to your opponent and catch him off guard.

Combo 3: As you land from a jump, use your medium kick, then slide into your opponent, and get him in a headlock.

Master Combo: Fire a slow Yoga Fire, then, just before it reaches your opponent, slide into him, using the double headbutt to put him in a daze.

Guile
Ex-American Special Forces, Guile has above-average power and speed, plus great versatility – he is, perhaps, the most powerful character of them all. His Sonic Boom is the fastest missile attack, and his Somersault Kick is second only to the Dragon Punch. His combos are great too...

Special moves
Somersault Kick
Sonic Boom

Combo 1: Jump in with a medium kick, drop down for a medium sweep, then finish with a Somersault Kick.

Combo 2: Throw a slow Sonic Boom and follow it. Then, as it hits your opponent, use a medium sweep, and jump forward with a medium or hard kick. As you land, pound the hard punch button to do the Back Drop.

Combo 3: Throw a slow Sonic Boom and follow it. As it hits your opponent, do the upside-down kick, then drop down for a double foot sweep.

Master Combo: This one is brilliant! Throw a Sonic Boom, jump in with a strong punch, then drop down for a squatting medium or hard punch (depending on how good your enemy is). Now throw a Sonic Boom and follow up with a clothesline punch – more than enough to take out any rival!

So, who would we recommend?

Well, which real *Street Fighter II* experts tend to favour Ryu, Guile is the toughest of the characters in the normal *SFII* game, with plenty of very powerful, yet easy to accress, moves. Dhalsim, Chun Li and Blanka all have their advocates too. In the new version of *Street Fighter II – Street Fighter II Turbo*, due in the UK in October – many of the advantges of these characters have been ironed out, however, to make the game more fair.

SUPER ALESTE

UK Release

Game: Super Aleste
Publisher: Toho
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

This is one of the shorter levels of the game - a quick blast over the surface of a space station. It still looks very pretty though.

Yikes! This giant mecha appears on part of the mine level. Watch his arms, but make sure you take in the lovely scrolling Mode 7 backdrop.

That's the best shoot-'em-up currently available on the Super Nintendo? If someone told us '*Super Aleste*', we'd find it hard to argue with them – this is a truly spectacular release, one of the best-looking games on the Super Nintendo, and in many ways a benchmark game. One of the main reasons for its importance is just how many sprites it manages to get on screen at any one time – and with little-to-no slowdown. For those who struggled through the likes of *Super R-Type* or *Gradius III*, *Super Aleste* represented a blessed relief – so the Super NES *could* manage a fast, intense shoot-'em-up after all, and without needing to resort to some sort of DSP chip for an extra boost either.

The other great thing about *Super Aleste* is the graphics. The game features 12 levels (more than some rivals, though it's still, be be honest, no real problem to complete fairly quickly), with some very varied backdrops – from the lovely forests-and-rivers of level one through a spectacular spinning Mode 7 space station (level two), a bizarre swirly green thing (level four, also depicted in Mode 7), to a futuristic mining canyon (level five), and a sort of organic affair, almost like you're inside some sort of gigantic animal (level 12), this is amazing looking stuff. However, the backgrounds are only part of it – it's the sheer number and speed of the enemy sprites that are sent against you that really stun. We've counted over, ooh, 70 or 80 sprites on screen at any one time with no significant slowdown, and at times there are even more.

Indeed, all this stuff going on on-screen at any one time would make the game almost impossible to cope with, if it wasn't for the game's last strength – the sheer number and variety of weapons it allows you to collect. You can build your ship up into a real wall of death to oncoming sprites – indeed, many people complain that the game's a bit top-heavy weapons wise, with the various types of armament threatening to completely take over the game. You can't complain that the weapons are boring, though – some are true originals, things we've never seen before, including the small trail of green droid things that trail behind your main ship, or the one which gives you a set of giant green globes which circle your ship, wiping out everything in their path.

A great game, then, and an excellent one to show Mega Drive owners – if the swirly space station boss from level seven, for instance, doesn't sicken them, nothing will. Yes, you'll have seen all the good stuff *Super Aleste* can do by half way through, and yes, the game won't take too long to complete, but this is still a top-notch release. Basically: buy it.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93%	86%	85%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	87%
64%		

VERDICT: The message is simple – shoot-'em-ups don't get much better looking than this. It's got a good feel too, though it *is* a little weapons heavy.

YOUR CHEATING CART

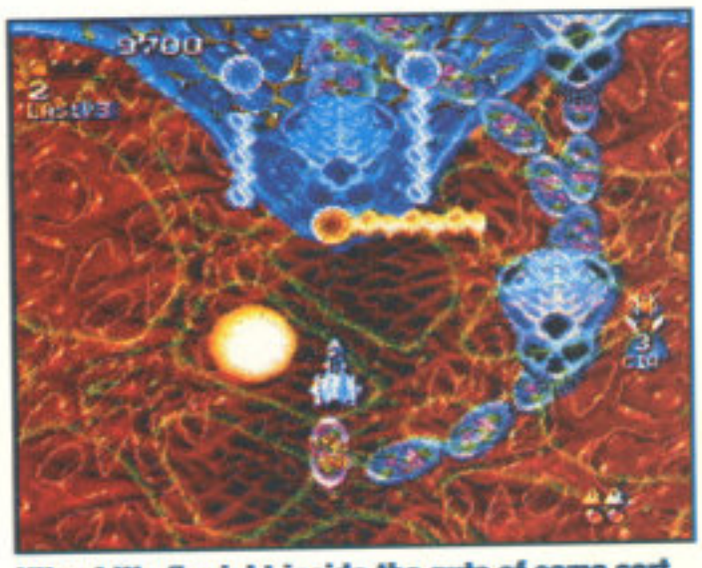
Got an Action Replay cheat cart? Yes? Oh good – then you'll be able to take advantage of these rather fab codes to cheat at *Super Aleste*. Here're the magic numbers you need:

7E01 5702 Unlimited lives
7E01 5203 Unlimited smart bombs

Finishing has never been easier!

Assorted extra weapons can be picked up – this giant green ball thing is one of the best.

Boom! Explosions don't come much more explodey than this screen-covering cracker!



Yikes! We fly right inside the guts of some sort of giant creature for the organic final level.

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

UK Release

Game: Super Adventure Island
Publisher: Hudson Soft
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The only real problem with this is its central character, Master Higgins, a typically dismal attempt to dress up a toddler in 'trendy' clothes to make him look cute. The graphics are otherwise of a very high standard, with colour splashed about all over the place.

It's fun to play, too. Looking at the picture here, *Super Adventure Island* probably all looks a bit empty, but the game moves along at a fair old pace so it's always throwing things at you. The only snag here is that, although it's far from easy, with instant death if you so much as clip a baddy with Master Higgins's baseball cap, you get quite a few continues, so finishing the whole thing is never going to be an exactly impossible task. At all.

Still, the music deserves a special mention. It's absolutely fabulous.

Doesn't he look sweet? Well, not really. You almost want him to plunge over the edge of that waterfall just to see the baseball cap knocked off his head.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	92%	80%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
69%		75%

VERDICT: It doesn't really excel in any area (except, perhaps, the music), and can easily be finished, but this is an enjoyable enough little game.

OR YOU COULD CHEAT...

If you're stuck on *Super Adventure Island*, you might find these Action Replay codes of interest:

7E030D02	Infinite energy
7E0D6C0C	Infinite time

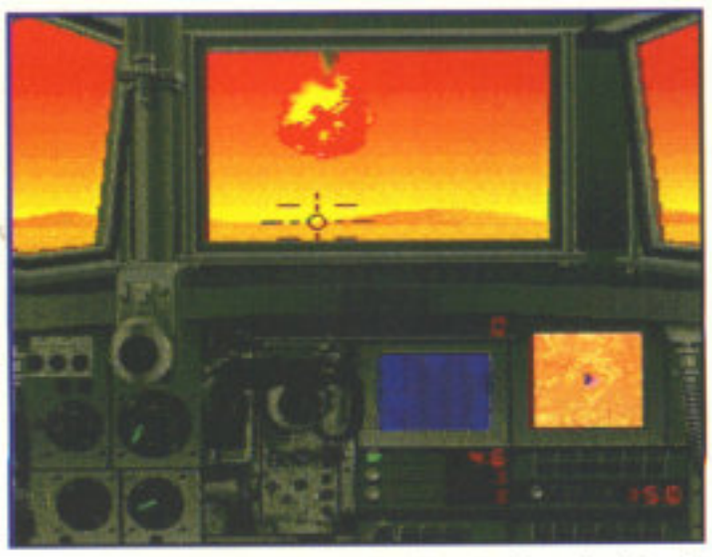
SUPER BATTLETANK

UK Release

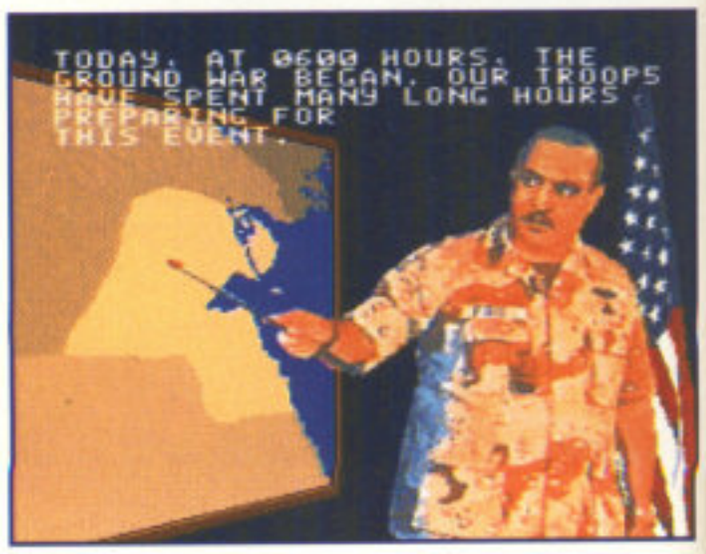
Game: Super Battletank: War In The Gulf
Publisher: Absolute
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Those with long memories will remember an ancient arcade classic called *Battlezone*, and underneath all the tank simulation dressing up this is more or less the same thing. It places you inside an American battletank, and sticks you somewhere in Kuwait – through the smallish slot in the tank's body that the gunner or whoever looks out of, you can see an equally small strip of desert. Often it gets much more exciting – enemy tanks, choppers and planes appear and attack you, and you have to shoot them down. Which is good, as far as it goes, the trouble with the game being that there's so little else to it that you're likely to get bored very quickly. Mission after mission consists of heading out into the desert, blowing some things up and hoping you don't run out of fuel before you get back home – fun the first time, but not much fun... well, not even the second time.

Yes, this has plenty of good explosions, and yes, some of the link sequences and mission briefings are atmospheric (and occasionally exciting), but there's simply too little to the game to make it worth buying.



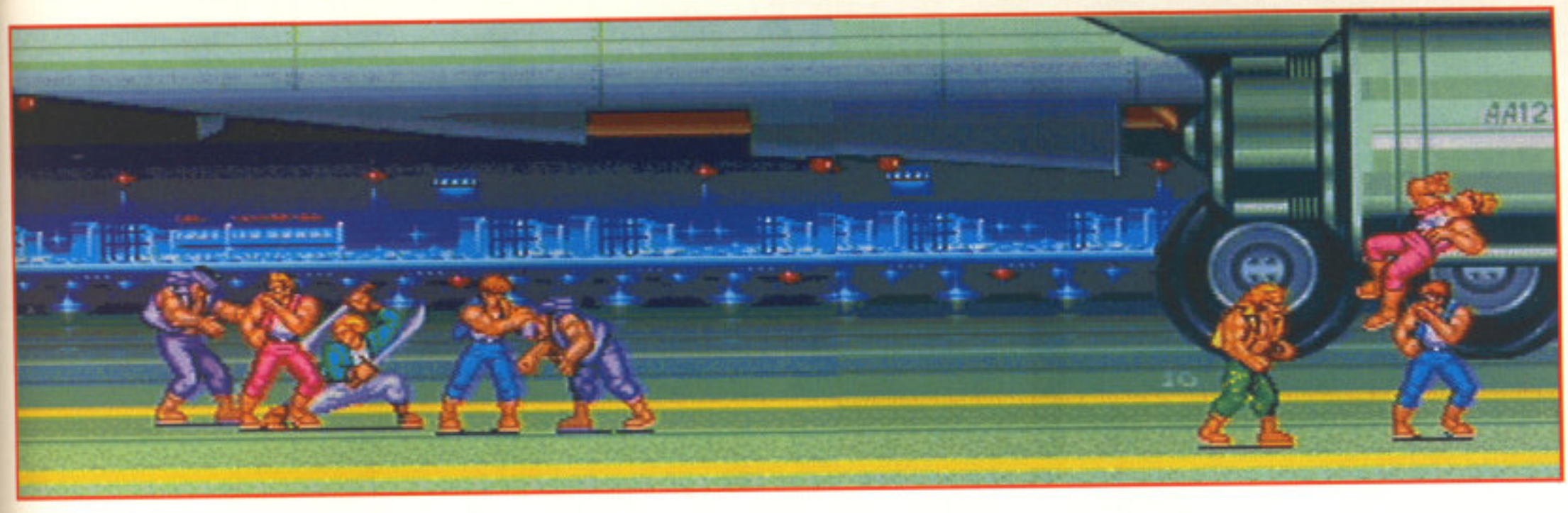
Boooom! An explosion rocks the desert, throwing lots of sand up into the air and possibly destroying an enemy tank. Keep an eye on the knobs and dials.



General Fox (probably) briefs you personally with his knitting needle. (*Oi! Give my shirt back! – Ed.*)

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
73%	60%	50%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
45%		50%

VERDICT: The graphics are pretty smart, and the whole thing feels quite impressive first time round. But there's just so little to it.



SUPER DOUBLE DRAGON

UK Release

Game: Super Double Dragon
Publisher: Technos
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1or 2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Super Double Dragon is another contender for the scrolling beat-'em-up crown, fighting alongside the likes of *Final Fight* and *Rival Turf*. It has its pros and it has its cons, but in the end it's no better or worse than the rest of them. (Though when you first look at the game, truth be told, you'll almost certainly decide it's worse – it looks terribly crude. Luckily things get better as you get more into it.)

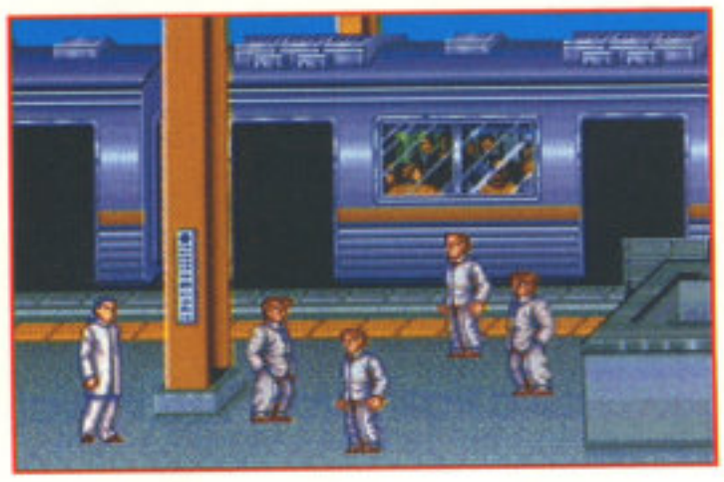
Chief amongst *SDD*'s advantages is that, unusually for this sort of game, you've actually got a huge variety of moves which take some practice to perfect. There are plenty of weapons to be found, too, which increase your repertoire still further – in many ways it actually gives you more to do than *Final Fight*, though it consistently looks worse as it does it. That said, however, the moves are all neatly animated, and as a result *Super Double Dragon* creates a pretty good impression of actually beating people up.

Here's one of *Super Double Dragon*'s terrific moves in action – the grab-'em-by-the-hair-and-knee-'em-in-the-face one. And someone playing with some sausages.

Oh, and there's a two-player mode, which is one thing it has over *Final Fight*.

But, all these plus points having been

'This lift ain't big enough for the four of us.' 'It might be if we all squashed up a bit.' 'Or if I killed you with this stick. Hur hur hur.' 'Oh dear.'



dutifully pointed out, set alongside *Final Fight* it's just not gutsy enough. The sprites are all rather diminutive, and nothing exciting ever seems to happen in the backgrounds – some clever use of the abilities of the Super Nintendo hardware would have improved things a treat (as it is, you could have done the game on the Mega Drive quite happily). As it stands, though, the game almost looks 8-bitish, and very play-it-safe in the style chosen – nobody's going to buy it on the looks alone, that's for sure. To be honest, we'd find it hard to justify spending so much money on such a primitive game – especially when, like so many of its ilk, it gets very dull very quickly. The *SNES* deserves better, basically – and should be getting it in the form of the coming-soon-to-a-shop-near-you *Final Fight 2*.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70%	65%	74%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	68%
62%		

VERDICT: A slightly different sort of scrolling beat-'em-up, but in the end it's just as dull as the rest of them. Nice animation, though.

DOUBLE DRAGON – THE EASY WAY

Want unlimited continues when you're playing with two? What you've got to do is start a two-player Mode A game, and play until each player has one credit left. When you're asked if you want to continue, both players should press START at the same time. Next time you're asked if you want to continue, you'll find that both players have seven credits. You can do this as often as you want, whenever you're getting low on credits, which effectively gives you infinite continues.

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

UK Release

Game: Super Castlevania IV
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Just about anybody should be able to see the gorgeous moody graphics in this shot, but believe us, they only constitute half the game's appeal. Quite simply, it also features some of the best game music ever heard.

If your first console is your Super Nintendo then you may be wondering why this game has that curious 'IV' stuck on the end. The reason, of course, is that this is but the most recent of a series of *Castlevania* games, a very popular series on the 8-bit NES which has made the transition to Super NES in fine style. It's a platform game, of course – something the Super Nintendo is hardly short of – but justifies its existence by simply being one of the very best. One reason is that it's more atmospheric than most other games of its type – the main hero sprite (called, rather unbelievably, Simon) isn't in the slightest bit cartoony, and the dark, moody graphics, and supernatural baddies (our Simon's a vampire-hunter, see, and the folk he comes up against all look like refugees from Hammer Horror films) give the game a very unusual atmosphere.

The rest of the game lives up to this distinctive feel – the music, particularly, is fabulous – though the game does have one problem. It's rather slow-paced, you see, and doesn't really get going until about level three or four – some people might have got a bit bored with the whole thing by then. Still, bear with it and you'll find the gameplay gets more and more involving, and varied (things like your novel whip thingie, your main weapon, work very well, for instance), while the sheer number of levels mean it isn't a game you'll finish in a hurry – and we wish there were a few more platform games we could say that about.

The message here is simple, basically – this is a great game, though it may not look like it on first viewing. Underneath the slightly slow, run-of-the-mill initial appearance is a moody, atmospheric and very well paced release, providing some of the best arcade-style gameplay the Super Nintendo has to offer. Make no mistake – it comes highly recommended.

And – did we emphasize this enough yet? – the music is truly glorious (good enough to spawn audio CDs in Japan).

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
87%	94%	90%
GAMELIFE 92%	OVERALL SCORE:	91%

VERDICT: One of the great Super Nintendo games – lovely graphics, great music, and gameplay that just builds and builds. Buy it!

YOUR CHEATING CART

Stuck on *Super Castlevania IV*? We're not surprised – it's long, and can be very tricky. That's why Action Replay cart owners will be pleased to hear of these easy-to-use codes:

7E13 F410	Infinite energy
7E13 F040	Infinite time
7E00 C302	Invincibility
7E00 7C99	Unlimited lives
7E13 F050	Unlimited time
7E13 F299	Unlimited heart

Simon, our rather ordinarily-named hero, carries a very big whip affair throughout the game. He can use it to kill evil creatures, of course, but he can also – as seen in this action shot – use it to swing his way across otherwise-impossible-to-cross gaps with nonchalant ease. Now *that's* what we call a game hero!

The biggest criticism that tends to come *Super Castlevania IV*'s way is that, yes, the music's good, and yes, it's all very moody and everything – but isn't it also just a little bit *slow*? Have no fear, we reply to such doubters – it all gets much more exciting as the game goes on. (No, honest, it really does.)

SUPER GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

UK Release

Game: Super Ghouls'n'Ghosts
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Our hero, Arthur, hot-foots it across the very hostile landscape in comic fashion. Don't be fooled by the attractive visuals – this is a *very* tough game.

Shoo! Go on, shoo! This giant bird is going to make mince-meat of Arthur in his skimpy loin-cloth – once he loses his armour, he becomes very vulnerable.

Gorgeous ship section is said by many to be one of the prettiest bits of *any* game, and who are we to argue? Remarkable, considering how long ago it was coded.

Brrr! Arthur's going to catch a nasty chill climbing this mountain with no armour on. That is, if that lurking beastie doesn't catch him first!

While *Super Ghouls'n'Ghosts* is, without doubt, a classic game, and well worth investing quite a bit of time and effort in, it must be remembered that it was one of Capcom's first attempts at programming for the Super Nintendo, and, as such, comes with a number of flaws built-in. For a start, there's the slowdown, which, at times, is bad enough to affect gameplay quite badly. But then – much worse, and much more fundamental a flaw – there's the annoyingly unforgiving, not to mention really difficult, gameplay.

Basically, this is a game where, if you're possessed of really, really, *really* top-notch gameplaying skills, and have lots of patience, you might be OK. However, if you're Joe Public, and as such only – well – average, you could find you're in severe trouble. For a start, the lack of a password system or any sort of battery back-up – a real flaw, and something that would almost certainly have been included if this actually-fairly-old game had been designed today – means you've got to try and finish the game in one sitting, an almost impossible task. (And that said, age is really no excuse anyway – Konami's great *Castlevania IV*, which first appeared at around the same time, has a useful password system, for instance, which gets you around exactly that problem.) And for a second thing, the game is rock-hard anyway – your little knight character, Arthur, can get dressed up in suits of armour for extra protection, but they're easily lost, and completing even one small section, let alone the game, without them is dreadfully hard.

Still, let's look at the game's good points – for (don't get us wrong) they are many. The graphics tend from the excellent to the truly gorgeous, while the sprites and levels are all well designed. There are some good inventive bits, plenty of levels, and some very atmospheric music too. And the game is, by current Super Nintendo standards anyway, cheap too. The basic problem is it's too damn hard and frustrating for the average gameplayer to get through without cheating (and that, though we're a bit ashamed to admit it, includes most of us here in the *Super Play* office).

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92%	88%	82%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	85%
79%		

VERDICT: Though old, this still has lovely graphics, and is still a very well-designed game. Still bloody hard too.

SUPER GHOULS'N'GHOSTS: THE EASY WAY

So, you're stuck on *Super Ghouls 'n'Ghosts*, huh? We're not surprised. You're probably dying to see the next level too, aren't you? We'll, we've got the cheat for you! Just try this for an easy stage select:

Go to the options screen and move down to exit. While holding down L and Start on Controller 2, press Start on Controller 1 – do this, and an extremely useful stage select and music select screen will appear. At last – you'll be able to see what each level of the game looks like. (Only the first couple of screens are guaranteed, mind. Beyond that that you'll have to push forward on your own...)

If that particular cheat doesn't appeal, and you want to make things even easier on yourself, try this great Action Replay poke instead:

7E044A01 Invincibility

And that, as they say, is that – the unbeatable game suddenly doesn't look quite so unbeatable anymore. (Now if only everything in life was that easy...)

SUPER MARIO KART

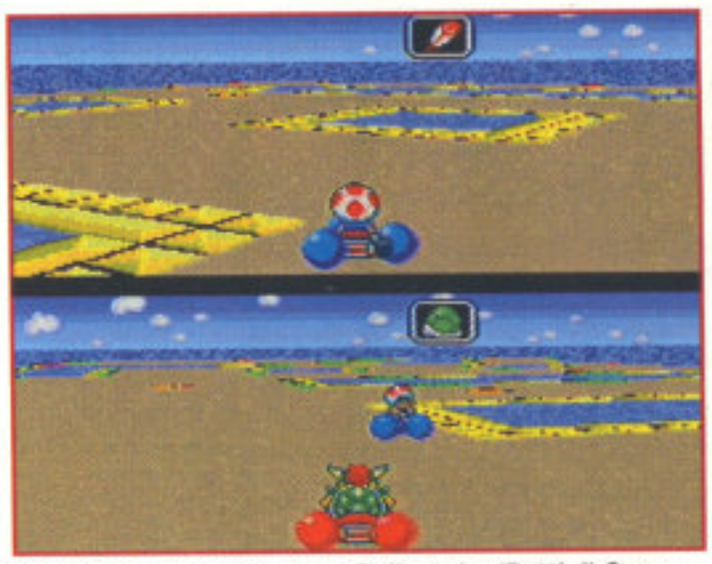
UK Release

Game: Super Mario Kart
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

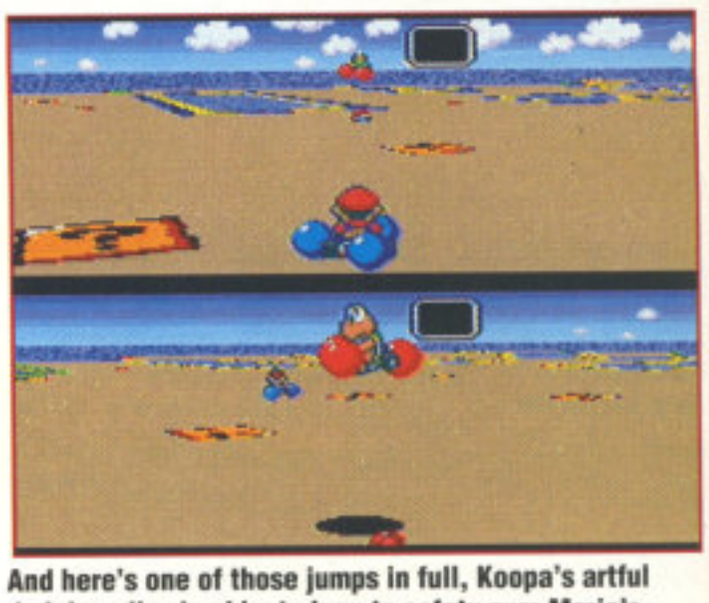
Super Mario Kart is unquestionably, undeniably, without a shadow of doubt the best driving game ever. And, though *Street Fighter II* and *Super Mario World* fans might protest, it's also a strong contender for the title of Best Super NES Game There Is. It really is fabulous.

First off, it's Nintendo through and through. And that doesn't just mean 'it's got Mario in'. It has got Mario in, sure. And Luigi. And Princess Daisy. And all Mario's other little chums. But Nintendo really go to town to make sure all their games have got loads and loads of neat little touches that you'll still be discovering months after you've bought the game. And *Mario Kart* is no exception. Taken at face value it's just a nicely-executed-but-simple racing game. But then you discover the Time Trial mode and the Balloon Game (see box-out). And then you start finding little short cuts and things – there are one or two on just about every course. And then, if you're really good, you might chance upon the Special courses, and even the 150cc mode. And then on top of that there are probably more cheats and short cuts for *Mario Kart* than for any other game in history. It's an incredibly deep and complex game.

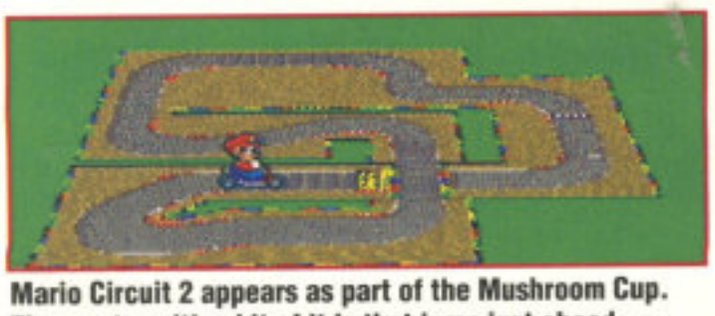
Another thing Nintendo always make sure of is that their games look great, and *Mario Kart* is perhaps their best looking yet. It doesn't leap out at you and shout 'Hey! I've got brilliant graphics!'. No, these are good graphics of the 'get-the-job-done-so-well-that-you-don't-realise-just-how-good-they-really-are' variety. The scrolling's ultra-smooth, the sprites rotate and scale perfectly, and the game never slows down no matter how much is going on on-screen (thanks to a DSP chip cunningly inserted in the cart that helps out the Super NES with its sums).



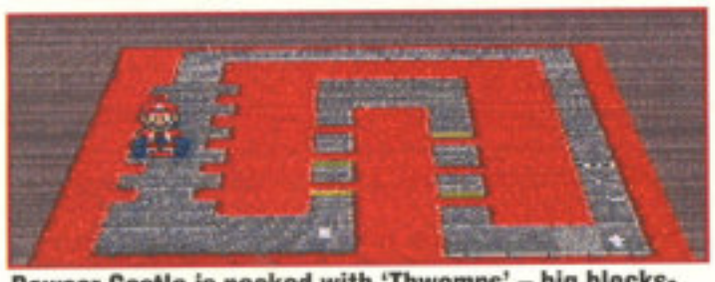
This is, of course, the great Balloon (or 'Battle') Game – here Toad and Bower face off, Toad's feather allowing him to jump over Bowser's green shell.



And here's one of those jumps in full, Koopa's artful dodging allowing him to leap to safety over Mario's otherwise-hard-to-avoid red homing shell.



Mario Circuit 2 appears as part of the Mushroom Cup. The most exciting bit of it is that jump just ahead.



Bowser Castle is packed with 'Thwomps' – big blocks-with-faces that can easily crush you if you're unlucky.

Ghost Valley 1 features a small short cut across a very thin plank that can save you lots of time.

THE THREE FACES OF MARIO KART

The brilliant thing about *Mario Kart* is that it's actually three games in one. They all outwit just about every other Super Nintendo driving game going, and they're all completely addictive in completely different ways.

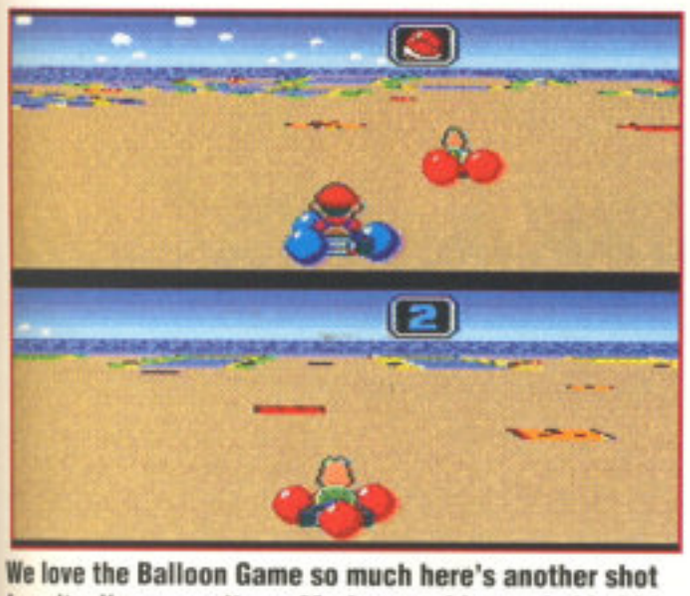
First and foremost is the Grand Prix section of the game. This has addictiveness of the getting-slightly-further-each-time-you-play variety, as you'll discover while working your ways through the increasingly tough courses. Having chosen your character, you then race against the seven other characters in the game (one of whom can be controlled by a second player if you like).

Then there are the time trials, where you get the whole circuit to yourself and you've simply got to do five laps of it as quickly as you can. Sounds boring? Not a bit of it. You can spend *hours glued to it trying to shave* hundreds of a second of your best time. And, indeed, there's an official Nintendo best time for Mario Circuit 1 – at the time of writing it's an incredible 0'59.84".

And, perhaps best of all, there's the Balloon Game, a sort of bonus game that's got nothing to do with racing at all. This represents two-player games at their best, and has you and a chum chasing each other around an arena, trying to pop each other's balloons with shells and banana skins. (Each player's got three balloons to start off with.) It's utterly, utterly competitive, and indescribably addictive.

And *another* thing that Nintendo games always are is fun. And they're always really addictive and last you for ages, too – there's two more things. And, as anyone who's picked up on the slightly tedious course this review seems to have taken will aleady have guessed, *Mario Kart*'s got all those three covered too. It's fun in an addictively endless sort of way. The thing is that, although you're unlikely ever to get bored of the straight Grand Prix side of the game, you've got the Time Trials and Balloon Game to play with too. The choice is almost overwhelming.

Taking each sub-game in turn, the Grand Prix is the most accurate depiction of proper racing imaginable. Each of the characters has pros and cons – Bowser's really fast, for example, but his weight tends to make him go wide on corners, while Yoshi's got great roadholding but tends to run out of steam at a lower speed than the rest. And they all handle completely accurately, just as if they're sitting in real-life go-karts, with the controls being especially easy to use. Computer-controlled character's behave realistically, as if they want to win the race as much as you do, so you hardly need to take advantage of the two-player split-screen mode. And the little pick-ups – shells that double as missiles, banana skins that make other players spin off the track, stars that make you uncrashable etc – add an extra dimension.



We love the Balloon Game so much here's another shot from it – Koopa can't see Mario, sneaking up behind him with *another* red shell. Can he escape this time?

GETTING THE MOST FROM SUPER MARIO KART

As we said, *Mario Kart* is a much more complicated game than it looks at first. Here are a few tips, cheats and things to generally try.

- If your engine's revving at just the right speed when the green light comes on at the start of a race, you'll get off to a turbo-boosted start, giving you an enormous advantage. It's very tricky to do, though. Try pressing and holding the accelerator just before the second red light comes on, or thereabouts.
- Don't, whatever you do, hold down the accelerator right from the first red light, though. That way you'll make your wheels spin when you start, wasting valuable time.
- Look for short cuts. There's a gap in the fence on Donut Plains 1, for example. And if you've got a feather you can jump onto a plank and cut off a chunk of Ghost Valley 1. Real pros will be able to do all sorts of things with mushrooms and feathers on later levels – Bowser Castle 2, for example.
- Try holding DOWN when you launch a green shell to make it drop on the ground behind you. And you can press UP when you release a banana skin to throw it out in front of you.
- If you manage to get a 100cc gold cup on the Mushroom Cup, the Flower Cup and the Star Cup you'll then be able to try your luck with the Special Cup, a new set of five even-harder-than-ever courses.
- And (*and*) if you get a gold cup on those as well you'll then find you can enter the 150cc cups – the same thing again only much, much harder.
- On the time trials, if you manage to complete a set of laps without crashing into anything or running off the track, the next time you race on that track you'll find yourself up against a 'ghost' character. Actually it's you on your last race, so you'll be able to see whether you're doing better or worse. You can actually save this ghost character to battery backed-up memory by waiting till the five-item menu afterwards, moving the cursor to Replay and pressing L, R, Y and X. It can then be recalled at a later date by going to the course select screen and, when you're asked if this is okay, selecting yes and holding L, R and B.
- And if you do an action replay of a time trial race, you can rotate the view around using the L and R buttons.
- Oh, and after selecting a one-player time trial, try pressing the buttons on Controller 2 to give you a computer-controlled opponent to race against.
- To give you the edge in the balloon game, it's worth knowing that, just after you've driven over a yellow rectangle and the display is whizzing through lots of pick-ups at random, you can press the A button to select a pick-up straightaway, rather than hanging around waiting for it to stop by itself. It might sound insignificant, but, as the saying goes, every second counts in the balloon game. Oh, and if you pick up anything other than a red shell, drop it and try again. It won't be worth bothering with.
- For a bit of fun, try positioning one player in the middle of the arena. Then get the second one to find a red shell, drive in a circle around the first player and then launch the shell. With a bit of practice you should be able to get it to orbit the first player perpetually. In fact, you should be able to get three or four shells spinning around him at once. It looks brilliant.

ANYTHING IN IT?

There's a rumour that *Super Mario Kart* began life as a third-party developer's attempt to do a Super *Nintendo version of a game called Powerdrift*, but was taken over by Nintendo's own people and modified extensively. It's only a rumour, mind.

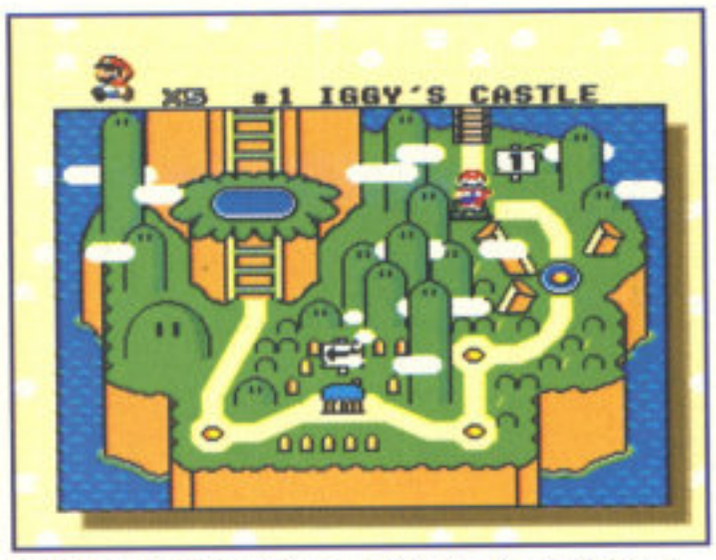
And the balloon game... the balloon game... the balloon game is just something else all together. Along with *Street Fighter II* it's one of the best two-player games ever devised – it's just so very competitive, and, although at first the outcome might seem to depend entirely on who's lucky enough to find the most red homing shells, it's not like that at all, and really does reflect the skills of the two players. This is a game that you can get better and better at with practice, just like *Street Fighter II*, and a top *Mario Kart* Balloon Game champ commands an awful lot of respect in most circles. Most circles where people know what counts, anyhow.

So there we have it. *Mario Kart* is the ultimate driving game package, and it's going to be ages before anyone manages to come up with anything better. As if to prove the point, it's been the UK's best selling Super Nintendo game almost continuously since its release, and has been bobbing about near the top of the Japanese charts too.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93%	85%	92%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	93%
94%		

VERDICT: The greatest. Buy this game before anything else – after all, it's as good as *SFII* and almost half the price.

So, what's so great about *Super Mario World*, we can hear you asking. Well, for a start, it's all so friendly to use. Just check out these neat maps, for instance.



In fact, we like the maps so much, here's another one. They show you just where you've been, where you are and (yes!) where you've got to go.

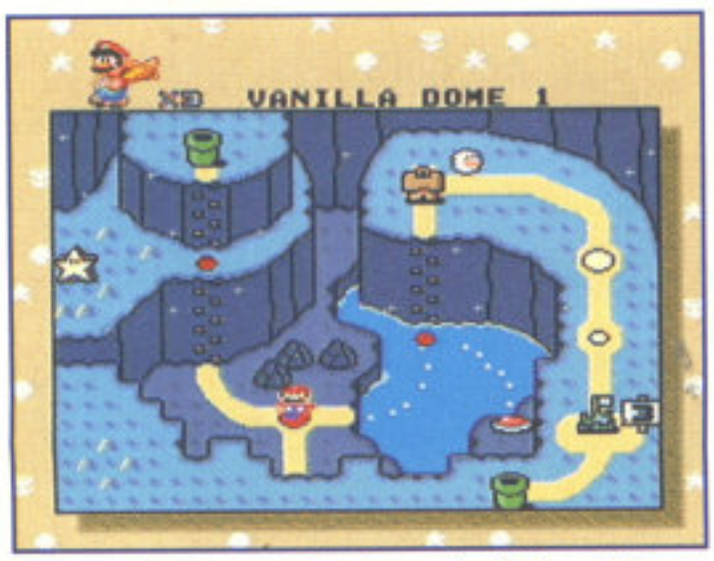
THANK YOU!
Mario has defeated the demented Iggy Koopa in castle #1 and rescued Yoshi's friend who is still trapped in an egg. Together, they now travel to Donut Land.

The maps also help tell the story, though not as well as these bits. As you can see, Mario has just rescued one of Yoshi's (very polite) mates, and is off to Donut Land.

SUPER

WHY THIS ISN'T A PROPER REVIEW: AN EXPLANATION

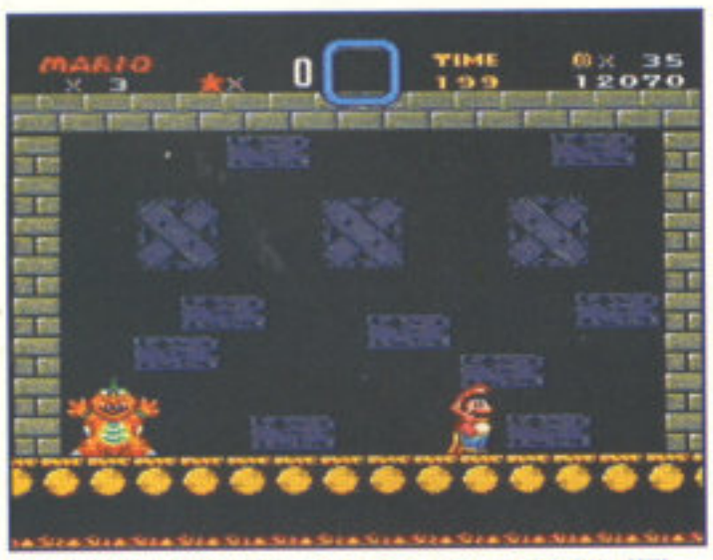
Because there's only really one thing to say about *Super Mario World* – buy it! – we've kept the review short, and saved all this space for a re-run of the ultra-popular *Super Mario World* player's guide from the now-very-hard-to-get-hold-of-indeed third issue of *Super Play*. (Some people are offering up to £15 for it, apparently!) Hopefully you won't find exploring every world, finding the Special Zones and defeating Bowser such a struggle after this. (That said, there is, of course, still a fair amount of nifty platform jumping and other gameplaying skills involved if you really want to finish the thing...)



Here's a map of The Vanilla Dome, the third world from Super Mario World. Where Mario's standing there are power-ups to be collected before you proceed.

This one shows the Red Switch Palace, part of the Vanilla Dome. Watch out for vicious Koopas in here, and don't forget to hit that red switch!

On another bit of the Vanilla Dome, Mario can hitch a lift on these friendly flying dolphins. Good jumping skills are required here!



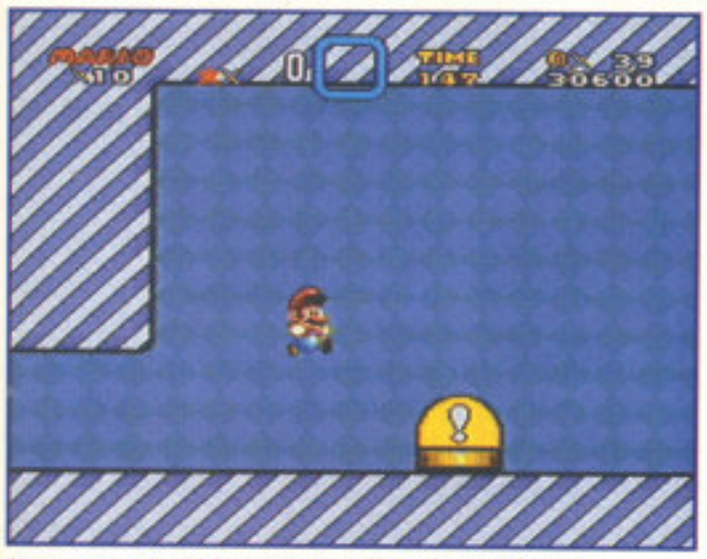
Uh-oh – it's Morton, the boss of the Donut Plains. Kill him by jumping on his head while he's on the ground – you can lure him down from the ceiling by running away.

THANK YOU!
Morton Koopa Jr. of castle #2 is now just a memory. The next area is the underground Vanilla Dome. What traps await Mario in this new world? What will become of Princess Toadstool?

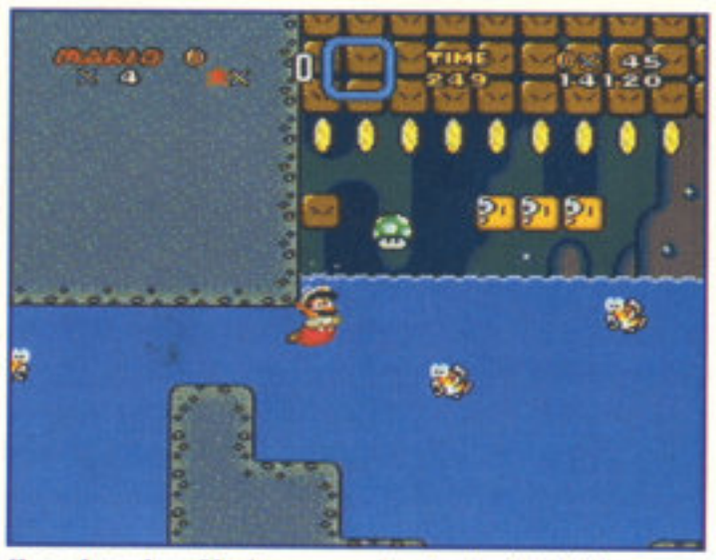
Hurrah, you've killed him! This is the very last bit of the second world, The Donut Plains, before you get to the Vanilla Dome. You've rescued another of Yoshi's pals.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	84%	94%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
93%		94%

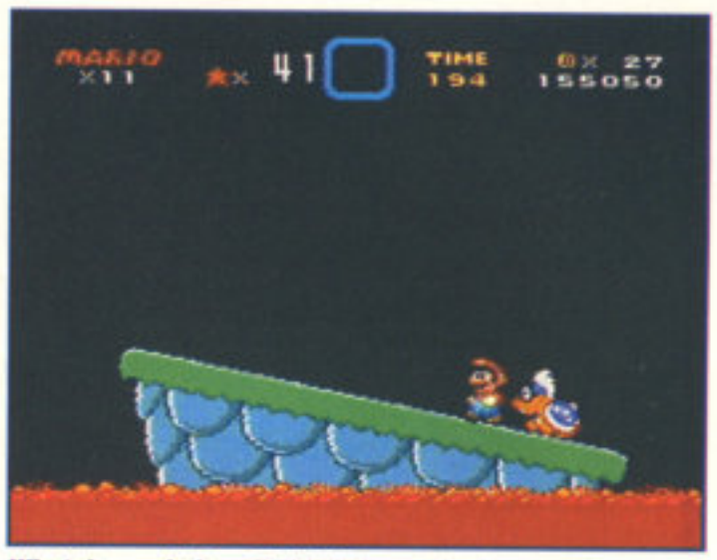
VERDICT: A true classic, as all the *Mario* games are, and great not just for its size, or its looks, but for its perfectly judged playability too. We love this game, are still finding new areas on it, and can't wait for the next one.



Here we in the Yellow Switch Palace, right at the beginning of the game. If you can't work out this bit on your own, you haven't got a chance on the rest of it.



Uga-glug-glug. Mario goes swimming in this bit from The Vanilla Dome. Find a single prize block underwater to have a chance of getting off this sublevel.



What do we do here? This is Iggy, the boss of the first world, Yoshi's Island. You want to wait until he's downhill, then knock him into the lava.

MARIO WORLD

UK Release

Game: Super Mario World
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit + BB

What can we say about *Super Mario World*? Most of you will have already got the game – after all, if comes free with many Super Nintendos, and even if you got the *SFII* pack or something similar, you'll have probably picked up what is arguably the best platform game ever seperately by now – so making a buying recommendation is, perhaps, irrelevant. Still, we guess it is worth re-emphasising here that, if you haven't got this game, you really don't know what you're missing. It's that good.

The main thing is not to be put off by the simple, chunky graphics – they're the sort that don't shout about how good they are, but are brilliant all the same, doing their job perfectly. And beneath these visuals lie an incredibly clever and very versatile game – only Nintendo seem to be able to consistently combine 'pick-up-and-play' accessibility with incredible gameplay depth, and this is as good an example of that skill as any. As you make your way through it, the game will get a tighter and tighter grip on you, and there are so many levels to it, you won't be completing the thing in a hurry.

Saying anything else is irrelevant. Without doubt one of the best video games ever, and everyone should own it.

World 1: Yoshi's Island

Completing this Island is pretty obvious really. Everything is exactly as it seems – there aren't even any hidden worlds to find (unlike in later sections of the game). However, here's some stuff you just may have missed:

- On Island 1 you can fly to a 3-Up located in the sky.
- On Island 2, hit all eight Koopas with the red shell and you'll gain an extra life; you can build your lives up by Start/Selecting repeatedly. Island 2 is actually quite a good level to keep playing through continually – here you can collect lots of Yoshis and lives while still early on in the game. Eat a whole load of red apples for an extra life, eat the green ones for more time. And the Yellow Switch Palace practically slaps you in the face.

IGGY'S CASTLE

Wait until Iggy's side of the hill is pointing downwards, then jump into the air and onto his head to knock him into the lava. By the way, did you know that (on the UK and American versions) it's possible to replay castles and fortresses by standing over them and simultaneously pressing the L and R buttons on top of the controller? Extremely handy, this, especially for, er, taking screenshots.

World 2: Donut Plains

The first, and most obvious, secret area of this game is at the end of Donut Plains 1, reached either with the aid of the cape or by activating the Green Switch. If you still still haven't worked out the whereabouts of the Green Switch, it's above the group of four Rotating Blocks at the end of Plains 2 (you'll need to throw a Koopa shell, or fly up and hit the fourth block).

Donut Secret 1 also has two goals, one leading to Donut Ghost House, and the second to Donut Secret House – use the Switch Block on the row of brown blocks to obtain the key. To reach the sneaky second goal to Star World 1 from Donut Secret House, hit the rotating block directly above the exiting yellow door and climb. And to reveal the Top Secret Area, take the cape to Donut Ghost House and fly straight up the left side of the screen.

MORTON'S CASTLE

When you find a row of five Rotating Blocks, hit the fourth one along to create a vine leading to an invisible extra-life block. To kill Morton, jump on his head whilst he's on the ground. So how do you get him on the ground? Well, what you have to do is lure him down from the ceiling by running in the opposite direction. He'll only take three hits to die.

World 3: The Vanilla Dome

VANILLA DOME 1

You can collect the power-ups by breaking through the Rotating Blocks as Super Mario, but to pass them, let go of a shell below the grid and follow it as it knocks out the baddies. Use the cape to fly between the yellow pipes to reach Vanilla Secret 1 (or wait til you've found the Red Switch). Continue right to complete the level.

VANILLA DOME 2

And the Red Switch? To find this, swim until you see a single prize block, exit the water, then jump on the Switch once you've carried it to the wall of brown bricks to the left. Then it's simply a matter of jumping down the left hand shaft. Finding the first goal, incidentally, is a doddle.

RED SWITCH PALACE

Hit the P Switch and jump between the brown blocks. The Rainbow Koopa should follow you and knock out all the other baddies. Don't forget about the Red Switch.

VANILLA GHOST HOUSE

Big Boo is the main problem here, but (as with the small ghosts), if you look at him, he stops moving. The concealed vine in the Rotating Blocks is of little help, but the Switch located in the Rotating Blocks in the room with the green ectoplasm is needed to complete the level. Stand on the blocks, collect the rings to the right of the brown door, then just stand on the switch and exit.

VANILLA DOME 3

This level is pretty straightforward really. Jump the Blarggs when their eyes start to sink (the highest flying Prize Block is a 1-Up); fly above the orange pipes for the 1-Up Pipe; run off and then back onto the screen when you see the bouncing Koopa shell (it will stop) and throw it upwards for Yoshi. Then fly from the flat ledge near the end to find a secret tunnel.

VANILLA DOME 4

Not much to say here, except that there's a secret lava area down the short blue pipe.

LEMMY'S CASTLE

Try to avoid the Wizard's shots, or preferably jump on his head or even scroll him off the screen before he fires. The floating door takes you to a Midway Gate that can be reached with the P Switch, providing you don't collect the coins beneath it. This is a rather hard bit, but luckily it's not really necessary. The rest of this level is easy, including the Sliding Stairs and Lemmy, who appears out of one of the tubes with two other Koopas as decoys. Then you have to merely decide which is Lemmy – not that hard – and jump on his head three times to open up your path to the next level: Cookie Mountain.

VANILLA SECRET 1

The only real tough part of this level is jumping through the six Koopas with the spring board. The green pipe to the left takes you to another green pipe leading to Star World. If you've found the Blue Switch then you can reach it with the jumping board. Otherwise try using the cape.

VANILLA SECRET 2

Take out the green Koopas by a) collecting Yoshi from the first prize block or b) collecting a cape, and c) bouncing from them one by one (you'll start to score 1-Ups if you don't hit the ground). Oh, and hit the Rotating Blocks above the spikes for a Silver P Switch to turn all the spikes into silver coins.

VANILLA SECRET 3

Flying Dolphins. Need we say more? (You've probably worked out that you can ride them.)

VANILLA FORTRESS

The bottom route under the yellow spikes is preferable to the upper route, although there's not much in it. Reznor is relatively easy to beat. To do so, try this: Hit one or more of the Rhinos from underneath, jump onto a free platform when the ledge starts to disappear and hit the remaining Rhinos from underneath. In no time, more or less you'll have done it.

World 4: Cookie Mountain

CHEESE BRIDGE AREA

The quickest way to complete this area is to take Yoshi in with you, ride the highest moving platform and collect His Wings shortly afterwards. But to reach Soda Lake you'll need the cape (from the start of the level) to swoop under the first Giant Gate and arrive at a 3-Up moon and a second goal.

SODA LAKE

A few Power-Ups from, say, the beginning of the level before would come in handy here, so that you can Cape or shoot the fish – or in case you get in line with the torpedoes. (Just try to stay out of line with the torpedoes, okay?) Complete this level to open up Star World 3.

COOKIE MOUNTAIN

A couple of debuts on this level. The fire-dropping Sumo Brothers are one; hit them from below or Cape them. New, also, are the pink apples; eat two on a level and each face dropped by the resulting Smiley Face Cloud will be worth 100 points, and an extra life if you catch all 10! Specifically for this level, use the red Koopa shell to clear a path through the moles, climb the group of four rotating blocks for a 1-Up – and don't forget to go down the blue pipe.

BUTTER BRIDGE 1

Damn tricky best describes this scrolling level, especially when you plummet to your death for the 100,000,000th time. Keep jumping on the tall platforms to prevent them from sinking, and use the Koopas to cross the larger gaps. Oh, yes. And practice a lot.

BUTTER BRIDGE 2

With Butter Bridge 1 behind you, you're through the worst of it. Indeed, you can simply fly across all of Butter Bridge 2 with the cape – a good job, as it's unlikely that you'll be bothered to do any exploring in this bit.

LUDWIG'S CASTLE

There are three stages to this castle. Stage one: Ball 'n' Chains. Don't forget that the chain part is perfectly safe to walk though. Stage two: The spiky enclosing ceiling. Find the Switch and turn it off at the last minute to give you time to leg it to the left. Stage three: Simply climb upwards. As for Ludwig 9the boss of this level), just avoid his fireballs and jump on his head – but watch out when he rolls at you!

World 5: The Forest Of Illusion

FOREST OF ILLUSION 1

The Wigglers can only be eaten by Yoshi or hit with a shell (else they turn red, and deadly). Look for a single Prize Block under the log section, collect the P balloon and float left for a short cut to the Ghost House. You will want to find goal one first, though.

Once you have, restart the level, touch the Midway Gate, collect the Super Star (knock it out when it's a feather) and leg it left – the Koopas become 1-Ups and the Wigglers become 2-Ups. You can collect up to 17 lives and repeat the whole process (don't finish the level, though) for up to 99 lives.

Also, in the section with the Koopas on the logs, float down onto a Wiggler with the cape and jump up onto another one. Providing you don't hit the ground in between (but float from the screen to reset the Wigglers to their original yellow state) your score will start to turn into weird symbols, and in under three minutes to the maximum value of 99,999,990!

FOREST OF ILLUSION 2

Grab the cape to kill the fish, and use Grab Blocks to kill sea urchins and increase your speed. Keep to the bottom until you reach a small chamber – hit the third invisible block and wait for the extra life to fall. Near the end of the level, look for a single yellow exclamation block – the wall to the left is false and leads to the Blue Switch Palace.

FOREST OF ILLUSION 3

Two goals here leading to the Ghost House and Roy's Castle. This level also introduces bubblified exploding bombs – *best avoided. Don't forget to visit the second* pipe and collect the pink apples, but ignore the large group of prize blocks (they all contain coins only). And the secret goal leading to Roy's Castle? Why, it's down the tall green pipe nearest the end.

FOREST GHOST HOUSE

Run to the right past the first section. Find the P Switch to the right, take it to the left of the brown door, then collect the coins and stamp on the Switch to reveal a blue door. Go through this door and run to the left. The first door is the main exit, but the door further along provides you with a lock and key.

FOREST OF ILLUSION 4

You have to find the second goal on this area, else you get taken back to area two of the Forest – it's down the small mid-air blue pipe shortly after the midway gate. To reach it, either use the cape or the cloud. Oh, and

avoid collecting the 1-Up from the angler at the beginning or he'll start firing spiky things at you...

FOREST SECRET AREA

Er, apart from making you feel rather queasy, there's nothing much to this flying-platform level. If you've collected the cape earlier on then you can fly up and over the Giant Gate to collect the three Extra Mario Mushrooms.

FOREST FORTRESS

In the second area, wait until both Grinders in the pit are going to the left and leg it. This is another level to really learn your way through on your own – tips won't be of much use. That said, though, did you know that you can reach a secret second red door with nine extra lives by flying from the ledge above the first red door? Complete this and you'll open up another entrance to Star World.

ROY'S CASTLE

The Brown Block Snake ise easy to get the hang of, but watch out for the fireballs and falling spikes. You may find it helpful to jump on the green block to pass the third Koopa statue. Roy attacks just like Morton.

World 6: Chocolate Island

CHOCOLATE ISLAND 1

Of the three enterable pipes on Choccy Island 1, the short yellow and short grey pipe before the Midway and Giant Gate are both cannons. Aim for the large Rhino the first time, bounce off the Koopa the second. The third pipe is between two blue Piranha Pipes and leads to a new Dolphin bit.

CHOCCO-GHOST HOUSE

The first half of the House is a simple run right job, watching out for the baddy dangling the deadly flame. The three grey blocks through the door turn into ghosts when you look away; lead them underneath the door to the right, and use them as stepping stones in order to reach the goal.

CHOCOLATE ISLAND 2

A strange area, this, because your course changes depending on the number of coins collected and the time remaining. To find the key you'll have to complete the first two sections with at least 250 left on the timer. Reaching the normal goal is easy, but note that section two will change if you collect all the coins (including the hidden one below the prize block) on section one.

CHOCOLATE ISLAND 3

Hop along the spinning platforms to the first blue pipe for a bonus coin area. You'll need to find the secret area to advance – for this you'll need the cape (from the Green Bonus Block) to fly underneath the Giant Gate to a 3-Up moon and Giant Gate number 2.

CHOCOLATE FORTRESS

Nasty, this. There are spikes, there are fireballs, and there are rocks waiting to squash you. And Reznor is waiting for you at the end.

CHOCOLATE ISLAND 4

Get the cape for this level to make the most of the grey pipe. Collect the three green mushrooms, activate the concealed Switch Block and, once down the pipe, hit the second P Switch. Fall down the right side and fly up and collect the power ups. If you haven't got the cape, jump seven counts of your timer after hitting the second and you'll land next to a cape to fly up with.

CHOCOLATE ISLAND 5

Use the cape to collect the silver Switch from the cloud ledge at the beginning of the level. Bring it down to ground level, use it, then use the blue Switch and the spikes will be turned into silver coins. Collect all the coins and you can go down the yellow 1-Up pipe, returning left afterwards if you want to look down the second yellow pipe.

CHOCOLATE SECRET

Don't bother with the green pipe on the first section, as it's a bit tricky (full of falling platforms and Hammer Brothers) and there's nothing to collect. On the second section, press down on the controller at the start of the hill and you'll slide down on yer bot. And you'll have to run over the sinking sand bars on section three or you'll, er, die.

WENDY'S CASTLE

Obviously not taking too kindly to intruders, Wendy has littered her castle with undead baddies, spikes, Grinders and Sparkies. In some cases you'll need to stand between two spikes and jump over the Grinder, but this shouldn't pose too much of a problem. Defeating Wendy is much the same as defeating Lemmy, only this time you have two fireballs to contend with as well as two decoys. Hopefully no problem.

SUNKEN GHOST SHIP

The second part of the ship is hard – very hard. The ghosts all appear simultaneously, but leave a gap sufficient for you to swim through every other time they form. So swim when the gap is there – hover while you're waiting (moving out the way of any forming ghosts). The next stage is great – a huge fall leading to a platform (if you stay in the middle) with another Super Star on. (Why not come back and try this level with the Cape?) Swim to the bottom for two extra Marios, and hit the question mark to exit.

World 7: The Valley of Bowser

VALLEY OF BOWSER 1

Bring in the cape to Spin through the Footie Players and Moles. Also; catch a lift across the pit of black flowers on top of a Mole; take the highest tunnels to find the Midway Gate; fly to the right of the black flowers for a 3-Up moon; jump from below to fill the gap in the tunnel floor about halfway through and (and!) look out for a single Rotating Block near the end goal for a vine leading to a 1-Up Pipe.

VALLEY OF BOWSER 2

Hit, then jump immediately onto, the single Prize Block to avoid the coloured shell. Or bring in Yoshi, eat the shell and (if desired) collect His Wings from just through the green pipe to skip the remains of the level. You'll need to (carefully) negotiate the sand maze to find the secret exit though. (Jump first from the extreme left of this section for a cape.) Then on section three, run quickly until the first sand bar is out of view, return (the sand will be gone) and use the platform as a run-up to fly up and left out of and onto the right side of the tunnel.

VALLEY FORTRESS

The sneaky thing is that this fortress is easier to complete without the collectable cape, which otherwise reduces your falling speed and makes the spikes harder to pass. (It might be a good idea to Power Up with red mushrooms from another level first, though.) You'll need to be running to survive the initial set of three spikes – the key to passing the set of quick spikes near the end is to run slightly before they even start moving upwards. Reznor is easy to kill (again) – you'll then be taken to The Back Door of Bowser's Castle.

THE BACK DOOR

There isn't really any great challenge to this level, as it mainly serves as an introduction to the Mechakoopas who – by jumping on, stunning and throwing upwards – you will be killing Bowser with presently.

VALLEY GHOST HOUSE

Hit the P Switch on the section past the green blobs to create two ledges with six doors, leading (taking the doors in order from left to right) to either the right side of the coin snake room, the exit, the exit again and the left side of the coin snake room (with a green mushroom). You want the short cut to Larry's Castle? Take this last door, then carry the P Switch until you are underneath the coin snake block, facing right. Hit the block, immediately hit the P Switch, and jump on the resulting bridge (it should be going right). Steer the snake to form the sharpest steps possible to reach an entrance to a chamber. Only small Mario will fit through – Super Mario can slide through with a run up, but starting the snake as small Mario is heartily recommended.

VALLEY OF BOWSER 3

Not much to say about this bit, except, er, it's easy.

VALLEY OF BOWSER 4

Go down the green pipe for Power Up purposes and spin through the large shaft of Rotating Blocks (fall down the narrow shaft and aim left if you are small Mario). Beyond the Midway gate, stand to the left of the wall in front of Chuck, run and jump against the wall to avoid the boulder, then run and jump over him onto the platform. All the other Chucks can be run past, except the last which you should spring over. Using the cape (from the yellow Bonus Block) to pass the large lava pit is easier than jumping on the Koopa.You'll need Yoshi to eat the key to open up Star World.

LARRY'S CASTLE

You could try to fly section one, but to be honest, getting to grips with the brown snake really isn't that hard. (Keep standing on it as it moves upwards.) The Magikoopa makes his return here – you may need his shots to blast through the Rotating Block walls. Defeating Larry is much the same as defeating Iggy, but here stand about a third of the way along the platform to avoid the fireballs from the lava.

BOWSER'S CASTLE

From the initial choice of four doors, take door three (Koopa Camouflage) as this is the only section with a collectable power up (if a camouflage square has holes, you can jump through it) – the higher of the two furthermost camouflage squares contains a feather. Take door one of the next choice of four doors to the Spike Sprint – as soon as the vicious spikes start to rise, wait for the counter to decrease by two, then leg it. The third section is effectively the Back Door level – the only advantage of reaching Bowser via the front door is the chance to collect a feather on the way. Defeating Bowser we'll leave you to do yourself...

SUPER OFF ROAD

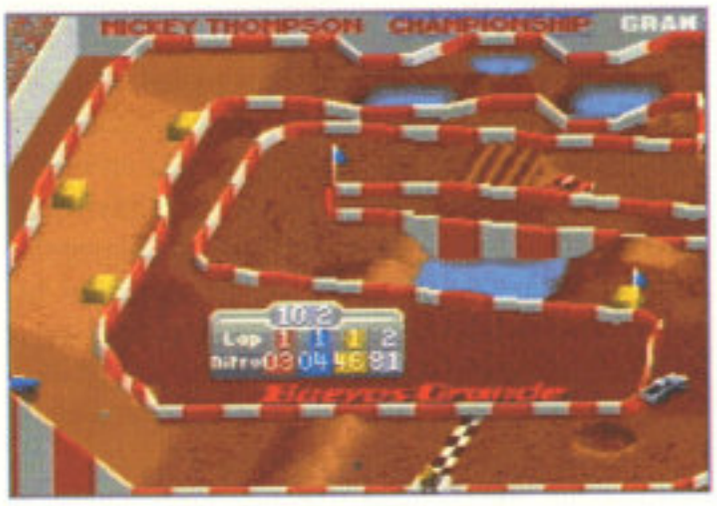
UK Release

Game: Super Off-Road
Publisher: Trade West
Developer: Software Creations
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

How much time you spend playing *Super Off Road* depends on how long it takes for the novelty to wear off. And the novelty revolves around the little trucks you get to race, which look great bumping and bouncing over the lumps, potholes, and puddles that litter the courses – the animation is absolutely spot on. The only other thing that might possibly hold your attention for more than a couple of laps is the music, which is really good. Really, erm, 'rocking'.

But when it comes to lasting appeal, *Super Off Road* just hasn't got much. The trouble is that, while racing round and round a series of to-all-intents-and-purposes-identical courses is all very amusing for a few minutes, having just spent £40-50 on a game one expects much, much more. This simply has the same level of longterm gameplay as earlier versions of *Super Off Road* on machines ranging from the Spectrum to the Amiga, which might be fine for a tenner, but simply isn't enough at this sort of money.

Super Off Road, then, boils down to a case of fine as far as it goes, but unfortunately that isn't all that far.



Super Off Road **scrolls, but only just – the vast bulk of each course (this is a typical one) can all be seen at once, which at least lets you know how you stand.**

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	85%	71%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	63%
40%		

VERDICT: Full of neat, nicely animated little trucks bouncing around the place, but not packed with gameplay.

MUSIC MAESTRO!

Super Off-Road's rather nice music was written by Tim Follin, who can also be heard in other Software Creations games, including the forthcoming *Solstice II*, which has a marvellous sort of ethereal chanting soundtrack. (Unfortunately he left Software Creations recently, though, so perhaps we can't expect too much of the same.)

SUPER PANG

UK Release

Game: Super Pang
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Super Pang's built up quite a following in the arcades, and on machines like the Amiga. But it's hard to imagine anyone getting quite as excited about it on the Super Nintendo.

The problem isn't the graphics – they're just as slick and colourful as the coin-op's, and the backdrops (a different one for each level) are just as attractive. It's hard to fault the gameplay, either. As with the original game, you control a little chap who runs across the bottom of the screen bursting bubbles with a sort of harpoon thing. The good bit about it is that each time you hit a bubble it splits up into two smaller ones, so pretty soon the whole screen's full of full of them, and it's difficult to know where to stand.

No, all that's fine. It's just that the original game was only really any fun with two players running about trying not to get under each other's feet. But, for some ineffable reason, the two-player mode's been left out of this version. It's still fun, but somehow only feels like half a game.

The point about *Pang* is the more little bubbles you split each of the big ones into (before they disappear for good), the more there are to dodge. As seen here.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84%	70%	79%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	72%
65%		

VERDICT: *Pang*'s a great idea, and this one's nicely presented, but a lack of two-player mode spoils things a bit.

SUPER PANG: WITH NO EFFORT AT ALL!

Stuck on the game? Then, for a useful level select option, go to the 'select game' screen, press L, R, R, L, Up, Down and you're there. Brilliant!

SUPER PROBOTECTOR

UK Release

Game: Super Probotector: Alien Rebels
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

You're probably getting rather bored of us raving about Konami games by now, but sorry, it just can't be helped. *Super Probotector* (interestingly enough known as *Contra III* in America, and *Contra Spirits* in Japan, both foreign versions featuring little soldier characters instead of *Probotector*'s robots) is one of their true classics – a great, all-action platform shoot-'em-up. It's a co-operative two player game, in which form it's great fun – the levels alternate between horizontal scrollers (with the biggest end-of-level bosses you've ever seen), and brilliant spinny-roundy Mode 7 overhead view things.

Basically, this is one of those games that does what it sets out to do perfectly. The graphics are top-quality throughout (though it'd have been nice if more colour had been used on the sideward-scrolling levels, as they look a bit stippled in places), while the soundtrack is a massive, pounding thing, that wouldn't be out of place in a film. The whole game is a loud, brash, gratuitously violent over-the top thing that tops any obvious rivals – on more or less any system. Indeed, the only real fault we can think of is that it rather lacks levels – more is always merrier in this sort of thing, and *Super Probotector* seems to run out of steam rather too fast.

Super Probotector **features plenty of platforms (such as the one our hero's lying on above), but it's the blasting action that takes precedence. One of the great things about the game is the amount of control you've got – you can fire in just about any direction, and you can climb ladders, swing from overhead cables and all sorts too.**

Yikes! This giant monster turtle boss thing bursts through the wall, shoots fireballs at you, and will take some serious killing! Keep out of his way!

Super Probotector **isn't all horizontal scrolling – some levels are like this, with a *Smash TV*-esque top-down view (but eight way scrolling). And great they are too.**

SUPER PROBOTECTOR WITHOUT TEARS

Having trouble with *Super Probotector*? Then try this neat cheat for size: When the screen is scrolling, press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right for 13 lives. If you can't get anywhere with that little lot, you really are in trouble!

(Or at least you would be if we hadn't come up with these even neater Action Replay codes for you. too. You will, of course, need an Action Replay cart to make the most of them...)

7E1F 8A63	Player 1 infinite lives
7E1F CA62	Player 2 infinite lives
7E1S 8C02	Player 1 infinite bombs
7E1S CC02	Player 2 infinite bombs

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91%	93%	92%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	90%
88%		

VERDICT: One of the best action games on the Super Nintendo, and packed with ultra-violence. A must buy.

SUPER R-TYPE

UK Release

Game: Super R-Type
Publisher: Irem
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

If you've ever ventured into an amusement arcade, the chances are you'll have come across *R-Type*. If not, *Super R-Type* is a pretty good way of finding out what you've been missing. True, it's not a conversion of *R-Type* as such – it's actually closer to the *R-Type II* machine. True, it does slow down horribly when there are more than two or three sprites on the screen at once. And true, there's an infuriating lack of restart points, which means you often find yourself getting sent back miles upon being killed.

But, for all its flaws, *Super R-Type* is still a cracking shoot-'em-up. It's got the same gigantic, beautifully drawn sprites as in the coin-op, the same awe-inspiring power-ups and the same weapons that get more powerful the longer you hold down the fire button. And, restart-point problems aside, it's also really difficult – rather than simply blasting your way through wave after wave of baddies, you've actually got to think a bit.

There are much better alternatives around – *Super Aleste*, for example, or *Super SWIV* – but this is still reasonably high in the shoot-'em-up league table.

A picture from embarrassingly early on in the game, showing one of the nice backgrounds (a planet), some explosions and a great power-up, but very little else.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83%	64%	68%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	72%
77%		

VERDICT: Not without its problems, but a good, solid addition to any Super Nintendo games collection.

SUPER R-TYPE (WITHOUT THE TEARS)

Want to find a level select (so you don't have to wade through the whole game unaided?) Then try this: On the second title screen, press the R button nine times, then UP nine times, before pressing START. Then, once the game's up and running, pause the game, and then press A, R and SELECT. Bingo!

UK Release

Game: Super Smash TV
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Beam Software
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneous
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

SUPER SMASH TV

Super Smash TV is based on an old coin-op called *Smash TV*, and that in turn was based on an even older (really, really old, in fact) coin-op called *Robotron*. *Robotron* involved walking around the screen shooting like crazy at swarms of robots who herded towards you. A simple idea but, as any nostalgia fan would argue, tremendous fun. *Smash TV* uses exactly the same idea, and is just as addictive, but bundles the whole thing as a sort of bizarre futuristic TV quiz show, where you're going from room to room clearing them of robots, picking up prizes and keeping an eye out for power-ups.

Okay, here's the plan: shoot *everything*, and try not to get killed. Reckon you can manage that?

The conversion to the Super Nintendo has been handled admirably, with clever use of the buttons on the controller allowing you to fire in one direction while walking in another. The action is overwhelmingly hectic at times, and a two-player mode makes things even better. The only real faults are bosses which occasionally outstay their welcome, and the fact that being such a simple game, it might eventually lose its appeal.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	80%	89%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	84%
82%		

VERDICT: Absolutely brilliant fun (for a while at least), especially with two. A shoot-'em-up in its purest form.

SUPER SMASH TV: THE *HARD* WAY!

If, for some bizarre reason, you're finding *Super Smash TV* too easy, try this. Go to the player/skill selection screen, press LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, UP, R, R and you should hear the game show host say 'Bingo!' When you chose the option you want and start the game, everything will be in fast action, making staying alive a *real* problem. Still, when you get to the level with the electrified orbs, you can stay in the bottom left-hand corner and fire and nothing will be able to get you!

SUPER SOCCER

UK Release

Game: Super Soccer
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Human
Price: £39.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

On the managerial side of things, before the match you've got to sort out your team's formation. (Here we've got for an avante garde 4-4-2.)

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	72%	81%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	83%
90%		

VERDICT: A bit peculiar, but the best soccer game on the SNES (though probably not for much longer).

Still, along with *Kick Off*, one of the few football game on official release in this country, *Super Soccer* pretty much has the market sewn up on the Super Nintendo – an odd state of affairs considering what a weird game it actually is. You see, *Super Soccer* happily sidesteps the two most common ways of doing a football game – the vertically scrolling pitch seen from an almost-overhead-but-not-quite perspective one, and the sideways scrolling pitch as seen from somewhere in the stands one – and puts us actually on the pitch itself.

Now, there's no denying the sex appeal of the Mode 7-created 3D pitch, which scrolls around the place following the ball – it looks very nifty indeed, especially when you first see it. We've no real complaints about the controls either – they're intuitive, allowing you to perform a number of quite impressive moves by merely waving the joypad around wildly, pressing a few buttons and hoping. Nor the speed – this plays a very fast, knockabout game, kind of like *Kick Off* in feel, but as if you were actually on the pitch yourself, rather than looking down on it. Two player mode is, of course, *the* way to play this, and great fun.

But (and you were expecting this, weren't you?), there is a problem. And the problem is the rules. This somehow manages to play as if it were put together by people who've never actually played a game of football in their lives. There's no space to go into all the games peculiarities here, but suffice to say, they'll either make you laugh or get very hot under the collar, depending on what mood they catch you in. Add to that totally inappropriate music, and players who seem to skate around the grass rather than run, and we get a fun game, but a far from ideal one. With loads of new soccer games on the way, this should get totally eclipsed any day now.

FOOTBALL CRAZY!

Want some nifty ways to get the upper hand at *Super Soccer*?

● For an unfair advantage (you get to select the superb Nintendo team!) in a two player game of *Super Soccer*, player two needs to press START and B on the Player Select screen.

● For two people to play as the same team, move player two to the team he wants to be (let's say, for the sake of argument, England), then press START and B to select the Nintendo team. Now, move player one to England, and then, by pressing Y on player two's pad, he'll cancel the Nintendo selction and become England too. To tell them apart, the second player's team will be dressed in the away strip.

● Here, on the other hand, is a silly Action Replay code:

7E10F80C No opposition keeper!

The odd thing about *Super Socer* is that, as you can probably see, in freeze-frames it looks like everyone's standing around doing nothing. But they're not. They're running about all over the place. Note the handy numbers, telling you who's who.

One of the weird (and slightly crap) features of *Super Soccer* is that, if you're playing down the field, and you're taking a corner, you can't actually see the goal mouth that you're meant to be aiming for. Not even that yellow dotted line is much help.

UK Release

Game: Super Star Wars
Publisher: JVC
Developer: Sculpture Software
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

SUPER STAR WARS

Film licences often end up as rather disappointing – failing either to effectively recreate the feeling of the movie, or to stand up as games in their own right – but not *Super Star Wars*. This one has it all – three characters to control (Luke, Han or Chewbacca – all looking exactly as they did in the film), guest appearances by everyone from Princess Leia to R2D2, and 15 fabulous levels that are not only fun and challenging to play, but tell the story of the movie perfectly. Most of the game takes the form of a horizontal scrolling platformer – Luke must make his way through the deserts of tatooine to a jawa landcrawler, fight his way inside, and then work his way past the mountainous territory of the sandpeople to Mos Eisley spaceport. Here he goes up against imperial stormtroopers, has a fight in the cantina, and meets space pilot Han Solo and his hairy monster pal Chewbacca. These three have to escape the spaceport, enter the giant enemy space station the Death Star, and rescue the princess, ending the game with a fighter attack on the Death Star itself.

As we said, most of this takes the form of a series of horizontal scrollers, but for this last space fight sequence something different was needed – the result is a pair of levels of Mode 7 space battle, using a style that appeared earlier in the game on a couple of landspeeder driving sequences. All off which sounds fairly groovy, doesn't it? And you'll be pleased to learn that it is!

Occasionally the game leaves platforms alone, and gives us these into-the-screen driving bits instead.

This Detention Guard boss appears on the Death Star, and must be killed before you can rescue Princes Leia.

When have you ever seen a film game that looked so exactly right – so true to its original? Never, that's when (just compare it to *Lethal Weapon* and the like!) – we suspect this faithfulness is due, in no small measure, to Lucasfilm themselves in fact being heavily involved in the development of the project. The music helps with this too – a perfect rendition of the film score, and truly magnificent.

Faults? Well, there are some, chiefly that the dull(ish) flying sections make the game's ending slightly anti-climactic, and that that slowdown crops up a bit. However, these aren't enough to put us off an otherwise excellent game.

EXTRA LIVES AHOY!

To find a hidden room packed with extra lives, go to level five – The Land Of The Sand People. Now, just before you meet Obi Wan, you have to cross a ravine which involves jumping from block to block. However, before jumping onto the first suspended boulder, try falling off the edge of the cliff instead. Push left as you fall, and you'll find yourself in a hidden room. Shoot around the cavern with your blaster and extra lives will appear – there are seven altogether. However, if you keep exiting the room, and stepping off the edge into oblivion, you can keep repeating the process ad infinitum. (Well, until you've got 99 lives anyway!) Great, huh?

This giant boss appears at the end of the Sandcrawler level (level four). You've nearly killed him here.

Watch you don't get squashed by these giant vice things on stage 12, the Death Star – it's easily done.

Outside the Sandcrawler there's much jumping between platforms to be done, then these guns to be avoided.

Stage eight is Mos Eisley spaceport, and features loads (and loads) of imperial storm troopers.

Giant elephant-like Banthas have to be fought off on the sixth level. Mind you don't get crushed!

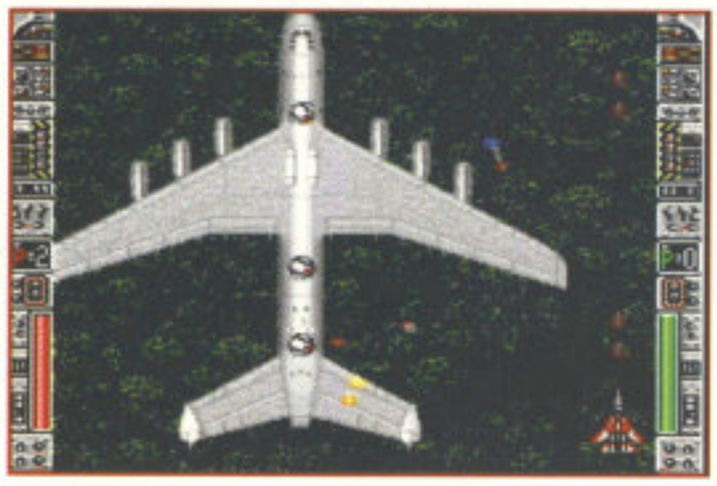
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88%	91%	87%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	89%
86%		

VERDICT: Film-based releases aren't known for their brilliance, but this lovely, faithful game is an exception.

SUPER STRIKE GUNNER

UK Release

Game: Super Strike Gunner
Publisher: Athena/Playtime
Developer: Athena
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit



This plane is one of the big bosses you've occasionally got to go up against. Unfortunately, most blasters can manage stuff much more impressive than this.

This game is only sold in Woothworths, which, if you're not a regular Woolworths customer, is probably just as well. You see, while there are loads of excellent vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-ups on the Super Nintendo – such as *Super Aleste*, or *Axelay*, or *Super SWIV* (below) – this isn't one of them. It's okay, but you could do so much better.

For example, all the best games offer a special feature, something that raises them above the norm. *Super Strike Gunner*'s is its two-player mode, which lets two people control planes at once, joining them up occasionally for super fire-power. All well and good. But then we move onto the fact that all the best shoot-'em-ups have really good graphics, and this is where *SSG* falls down. *Super Strike Gunner*'s are decidedly mediocre, with extra dull backgrounds. The explosions are quite nice, though. It's also pretty easy, so you'll finish it in no time. At which point it's hardly worth asking the question 'Should you buy it?', but we'll go for it anyway. No – buy *Super Aleste*

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
58%	50%	69%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
64%		65%

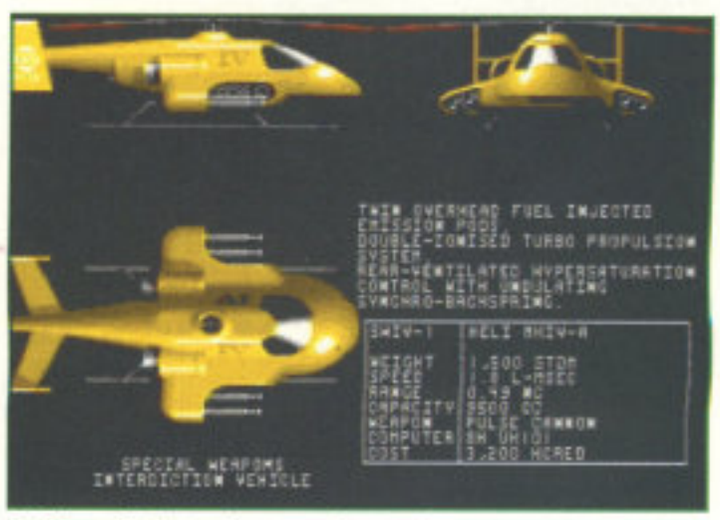
VERDICT: Not one of the Super Nintendo greats – everything it can do has been done so much better before.

SUPER SWIV

UK Release

Game: Super SWIV
Publisher: Storm
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

SWIV **normally gives you two very different mounts – a helicopter (which can fly over ground obstacles) and a jeep – but this bit puts you in a couple of jets instead.**



And here's the tech spec of one of your machines – the rather more useful helicopter. That said, however, the jeep here isn't the weak sister it was in *Silkworm*.

It's had an interesting genesis, this one. It started out as a sequel to developer Storm's home computer conversion of the coin-op *Silkworm*, but along the way things changed (including the name) leaving us with this very different, but very good, shoot-'em-up. The main thing *SWIV* borrows from *Silkworm* is the idea of a co-operative two-player mode, with one player controlling a little helicopter, and the other a ground-based jeep. However, the graphics and setting are all much more futuristic in this second game, and (more significantly) the action has been changed from a horizontal perspective to a vertical one.

The result is an unqualified success – the graphics are great (very slick, with lots going on on-screen), everything's very well designed, it's packed with some smashing missiles and other weapons, and an initial look would make you suspect it's just as good as anything from Konami or Capcom. And it is too – up to a point. The downside, you see, is that the mainly static bosses are all a bit boring, making some bits subdued and slow. Still, it's an impressive achievement for Storm.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	64%	75%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	
83%		82%

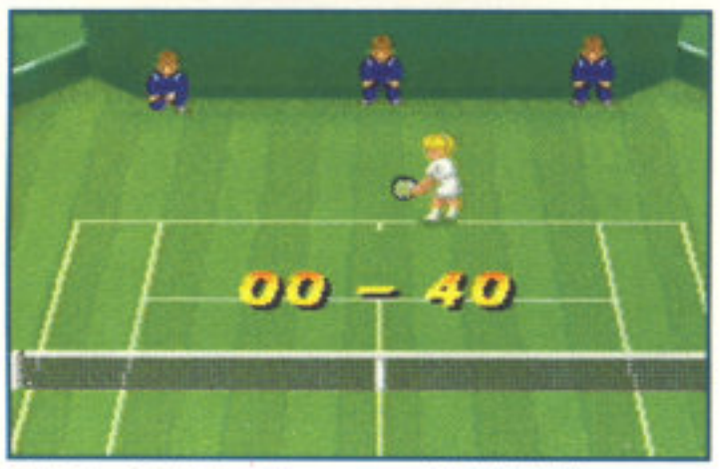
VERDICT: One of the best SNES shoot-'em-ups around, made interesting by the unusual choice of vehicles.

UK Release

Game: Super Tennis
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Tonkin House
Price: £39.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

SUPER TENNIS

Aargh! It's raining pumpkins! (Either that or there's something slightly odd about the way *Super Tennis* handles the perspective on the ball.)



Match point! And – erk – guess which side's the one with the '00'! Still, it was nice of the Kwik Fit Fitters to turn up to cheer us on.

An old release, sure, but still one of the very best two-player games of all, *Super Tennis* has everything going for it – apart, maybe from a four-player mode, allowing you to try multi-player doubles matches, as is available with *Jimmy Connors' Pro Tennis Tour* and a Hudson Soft Super Multitap (see page 39 for details). In every other way, *Super Tennis* can easily hold its head high against the best tennis games on any other machine – indeed, here at *Super Play* we suspect it might still be the best of them all.

So, what's it got going for it? Try a brilliant 3D court, for starters (Mode 7, of course) – the way it spins around when the players change ends is excellent. Then take the controls – intuitive, easy to use, and varied, with every button on the joypad performing a very distinctive move. Or what about the speed and fluidity – no slow-down at all. The bird's-eye view intro sequence is great too, as are the cute little players (though, to be fair, some around here have expressed a wish that they could perhaps be a *little* less cute looking). Best of all, though, is the simple, straightforward 'feel' of it all – it's just like playing real tennis. No really. In fact, it's better than real tennis. We can safely say that, even if you hate playing tennis, you'll love playing *Super Tennis*.

What else is there to say? Nothing much – just that, at this price, you really do owe it to yourselves to try *Super Tennis* out. We know you won't regret it.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80%	80%	94%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	92%
93%		

VERDICT: The slickest, most playable, most thoroughly enjoyable tennis game it's possible to imagine.

SUPER TENNIS FOR PROS

Want a few quick hints to *Super Tennis*? Then you've come to the right place!

Picking your players

Average players – Debbie, Erin and Colette of the women players, Meyer or Steve from the men – are best for beginners to practice with, but for a chance to win on the circuit go for these:

Women: Amy, Kim, Donna, Lisa
Men: Phil, Matt, John, Hiro

Picking the tournaments to compete in on the circuit

Some tournaments are hard to win, some easy. To become *Super Tennis* champ you'll have to enter lots of them – here are the ones to go for:

RIO OPEN: Only the poor players go for this one – don't bother.

MELBOURNE OPEN: The first major event, and worth going for. Easy to win too.

NAIROBI OPEN: Not many top players enter, and has a tricky grass surface, so winning here can earn you some valuable points.

PARIS OPEN: Very hard, with all the top players taking part. Avoid, unless you're pretty hot stuff – you'll get thrashed otherwise.

BEIJING OPEN: Skip this one – it's of very poor standard.

LONDON OPEN: Wimbledon, in other words. Hard to win, but a major event, so big points are at stake.

TOKYO OPEN: Easy to win, so if you need the points, enter it. Otherwise, rest up and wait for New York.

NEW YORK OPEN: The final of finals – hard to win, but (needless to say) you've got to enter.

Finally, some codes:

Action Replay codes for fun with the game:

7E01 0E01	Player 1 has 00 points
7E01 0E08	Invisible players (!)
7E00 0200	Weird court
7E01 7010	Invisible court (ie no white lines)

Pass codes to let you get to the end of the game:

WOMEN'S FINAL
(Straight to New York, with you playing as Amy ranked joint 1st)

CM7U3BT
RUH5QT3
F9QGJST
FTLWMT1
NS1RS5Z
DT994D9
K8XD3HR
ZJP

Now you've just got to win the final on your own!

SUPER WWF WRESTLEMANIA

UK Release

Game: Super WWF Wrestlemania
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Come down from there! We're in the middle of a tag team match here, so that other wrestler's waiting in the wings for the signal to come on and take over.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88%	70%	78%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	74%
69%		

VERDICT: Really slick, with spot-on graphics, but a little flimsy, and consequetly low on lasting appeal.

What on earth should one be looking for in a wrestling game? Good graphics? *Super WWF* certainly comes up trumps there, with well-drawn sprites which continue to look good while they're moving thanks to some excellent animation. There's plenty of WWF-style glitz scattered about the place too, to add a sense of occasion.

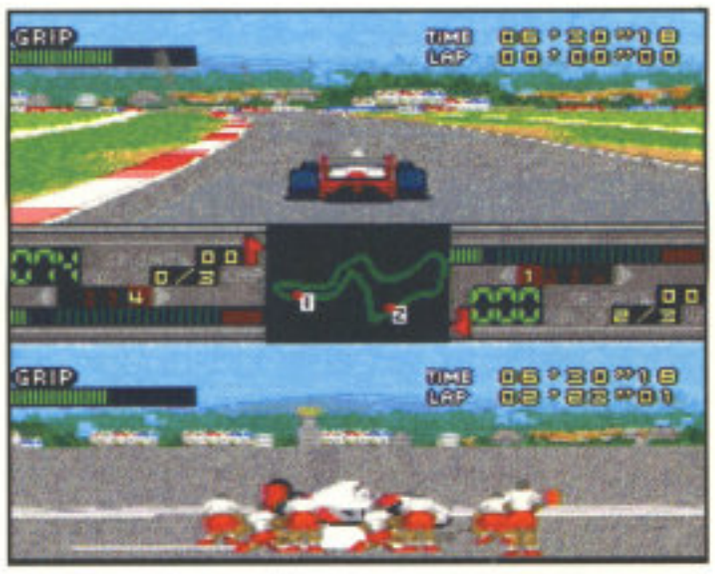
Realistic moves? *Super WWF*'s got loads of moves, crossing the whole spectrum, from punches and kicks to impossibly complicated holds. And you can even jump outside the ring and fight down on the floor if you want. The only problem here is that, although all the top WWF wrestlers are represented, and they all look different, they all do just the same moves – no specialities here.

And the problems continue with a complete failure to provide a tournament mode, so you're limited to just playing on-off matches the whole time, and one-player games that're too easy. (It's much better with two.) So it's a game that looks nice but lacks depth, and consequently doesn't have much lasting appeal. Watch out for the sequel!

SUZUIKI F1

UK Release

Game: Suzuki F1
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: LOZC
Price: £39.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit



As player one goes streaking into the lead, player two has to make a pit stop to get his tyres sorted out. That's the kind of thing that happens in Formula One.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78%	62%	69%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	72%
75%		

VERDICT: Fast and playable, with a handy two-player mode, but it looks inescabably old-fashioned.

Nothing to do with motorbikes – Aguiri Suzuki is actually a 'top' Japanese racing driver, even if you and I have never heard of him – this fast, split-screen Formula One game is good stuff, even though it's getting on a bit now. It's still got very fast graphics, though, and neat going-into-tunnels sequences, making for a good looking game – one that would quite happily sit head and shoulders over most other F1 games if it weren't for a couple of minor things.

Firstly, the viewpoint is such that you can't see the corners coming up until they're nearly upon you, making for rather more spins off than would be ideal.

And secondly, a whole bunch of Grand Prix games have been released in Japan since this came out, at least some of which (*Human Grand Prix*, for example, or *Nigel Mansell F1 Challenge*) are significantly smoother, more realistic and better handling than this one.

However, for the time being at least, this is the Formula One driving game Nintendo have chosen to release into this country, and we have no problems with it. It's just that considerably better has appeared on the Super Famicom since. This is a good last generation game, it's true, and you'd probably get on just swimmingly with it, but it's a last generation game all the same.

SYVALION

UK Release

Game: Syvalion
Publisher: JVC
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The more your dragon gets hit – and getting hit by hordes of baddies in these tight little corridors is easily done, believe-you-us – the redder he gets.

Until he gets so red, as here, that a warning flashes up on screen and, seconds later – unless you're very lucky – the poor chap explodes into a hundred fragments. Boo.

The only really notable feature of *Syvalion* – and the only reason it's possible to get even slightly excited about it – is the snaky dragon thing you get to control. He snakes about really nicely, although his size means that he attracts enemy fire rather too easily for comfort. Being a dragon, he's got fiery breath, which makes an effective weapon to strike back with.

The trouble is that, brilliant though the dragon is, there's not really much for him to do apart from snaking about frazzling baddies. The game's organised as a series of scrolling mazes which quickly become repetitive, and the bosses at the end of each are pleasantly weird but, again, repetitive. The graphics hold no surprises, either, with dull scenery and largely black backgrounds.

It's fun for a couple of casual goes, but once the novelty wears off you'll be looking around for other entertainment.

At the end of each maze of corridors a big room awaits, complete with boss creature to liven things up. This 'uns a sort of snail thing. (We think.)

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
64%	45%	48%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	46%
44%		

VERDICT: A neat dragon-thing this game might have, but otherwise it's all fairly event-free. Not a good buy.

TEST DRIVE 2

UK Release

Game: Test Drive II
Publisher: Accolade
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Test Drive II started life as an Amiga and PC game and, to be honest, it shows. The graphics look all sort of tatty and grubby, and there's not much in it to actually do other than drive along a road racing against a single computer-controlled competitor and trying to avoid getting pulled over by the police for speeding. This quickly gets boring and, while its accurate 'simulation' approach might have worked on the PC, it looks awkwardly out of place on the Super Nintendo. (Although, if the truth be told, PC owners didn't go a bundle over this either.) The steering's a bit tricky to get to grips with, too, and any difficulty the game might claim to have can largely be put down to that.

Uh-oh – how do we talk our way out of this one? (Looks like we can't – there's the ticket already. Where's the fun in a driving game where you can't go fast?)

It's not all bad news, though. To *Test Drive II*'s credit, the road scrolls nice and smoothly, with some quite convincing hills and dips. And the way the cars (there are four expensive sports cars to choose from) behave is really very accurate – the gears and steering work just like a real one's.

But when it comes down to it the game's just not very exciting, in exactly the same way that driving a real car usually isn't. *TDII* will have very little effect on your adrenalin levels, and you'll quickly get bored with it.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
68%	70%	59%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	58%
54%		

VERDICT: Proof, if any were needed, that making a game realistic isn't always a good thing. This simply gets boring.

TERMINATOR

UK Release

Game: The Terminator
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

The first *Terminator* film is, of course, a classic of its type – and ideal fare for ideal video game conversion. After all, it's basically just one long shoot-'em-up, packed to the gills with action sequences just begging to be turned into sprites-and-explosions game set-pieces. It's unsurprising, therefore, that that's what Mindscape have done, but while they haven't made a complete botch job of it, this has to be filed a disappointment. It's decent looking enough (atmospheric, but also basically uninspired and far too dark), and sounds great (all solid explosions and good music), but assorted gameplay flaws let the side down a treat. There are far too many points where the game designers expect you to jump off a platform blind, hoping to hell there's going to be something just off-screen for you to land on. Almost as annoying are the points where enemies shoot at you from off-screen, forcing you to crawl along at snails pace. Not a bad attempt, then, but flawed.

How does this picture look to you – 'dark and moody', or 'too bloody dark to see anything?' Well, that's how the game looks, we're afraid.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
53%	86%	42%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	59%
55%		

VERDICT: Sadly, not great. What could have been a fab film licence is dark, repetitive and fatally flawed.

TERMINATOR 2: ON THE WAY

Terminator fans willing to give another game a chance will be interested to know that not one but two *Terminator 2* games from Acclaim are on the way. The first, due soon, is a fairly standard collect-'em-up affair, while the second – due in October or November, and based on the arcade game – is actually a Super Scope release, and looks rather like *Operation Wolf*.

TOP GEAR

UK Release

Game: Top Gear
Publisher: Kemco
Developer: Gremlin Graphics
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Top Gear is a driving game of the old school. It doesn't use Mode 7 at all (*F-Zero* and *Mario Kart* do, on the other hand) and consequently might just as well be running on a computer as a Super Nintendo. The gameplay is a little, erm, basic, too. Essentially you just sit there with your thumb on the accelerator, occasionally moving left and right to avoid other cars. But the road moves nice and quickly (so quickly, in fact, that it sometimes makes your eyes go a bit funny) and the tunes are fairly easy on the ear. (If you're a game-music lovin' kinda guy.)

All the best driving games have a split-screen two-player mode, and here's *Top Gear*'s. You can't help feeling it's a bit of an old-fashioned-looking game.

And it's fun. *Top Gear*'s got the huge advantage of a split-screen two-player mode (something developers Gremlin started a trend for, and which makes all the difference in games like the great *Super Mario Kart*), so if you get bored of racing against computer-controlled cars – which won't take long, as they don't put up much of a fight – you can take on a friend. *Mario Kart* would be a far better bet, though.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75%	70%	85%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	76%
69%		

VERDICT: Not at all bad really, though hardly at the cutting edge of SNES driving games. Good with two.

TOP GEAR: THE EASY WAY

We've only got the simplest of cheats for *Top Gear*, truth be told, but it's a goodie (if you've got an Action Replay cartridge, that is). Just try 7E1E 6C03 for infinite nitros. Use 'em on the straights and you need never be overtaken again.

TURTLES IV

UK Release

Game: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles IV: Turtles In Time
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Some people like the Turtles. Some people hate them. And lots of us simply regard them as last year's (or even the year before's) thing. For those who're willing to give it a shot, however, *Turtles IV* is actually a lot better than it has any right to be, in a shallow but enjoyable sort of way. Against it, it has the fact that it's simply a scrolling beat-'em-up, and as such extrordinarily shallow – although the amount of variety the game manages to pack into each level goes some way towards making up for this. It's not all yours standard sideways scrolling stuff, you see – there are riding-along-on-surf-board levels and all sorts too. As far as it goes, this is great fun all round.

Big, bright, chunky graphics, plenty of spites on screen, and little-to-no slowdown add up to a surprisingly enjoyable game. We're surprised how much we like it.

TURTLES: THE EASY WAY

For ten lives per Turtle, use Controller 2 on the title screen, and press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A (the standard Konami cheat). You now go to an option screen where you'll be able to change Rest to 10.

For a boss select, use Controller 2 on the title screen, and press Up, Up, Up, Down, Down, down, B, A, B. Start the game from the select screen.

To see what happens when you complete the game, again use Controller 2 on the title screen, and press X, Y, B, A, Up, Left, Down, Right, R, L, and start the game with Controller 1.

To select the starting level, use Controller 2 on the title screen, and press left, Right, Left, Right, L, R, and start the game with Controller 1.

For those with an Action Replay cart, try this: 7E00 9661. This will give you infinite time on the two-player 'versus' mode.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88%	80%	84%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	84%
76%		

VERDICT: Almost against our better judgement, and despite the fact it's so shallow, we really like it. So sue us.

ULTRAMAN

UK Release

Game: Ultraman
Publisher: Bandai
Developer: In-house
Price: £39.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

If you like a good laugh, you'll go a bundle on *Ultraman*. If, however, a good game is more along your lines, you might be better off looking elsewhere. For a start, it's a beat-'em-up, and (short of the likes of *Final Fight, SFII* et al) they're rarely works of genius. This one less than usual – it's all about giant monsters you see, in the Godzilla mould (Ultraman himself is basically a 300 foot tall superhero in a space suit, while the baddies are all ridiculously shaped, but similarly sized, fellow monsters), so you'll spend most of the time trying to get over the innate ridiculousness of it all.

That's old Ulty on the right, here tangling with a monster called Bemular. Notice how small the trees are – these are seriously big boys, alright.

Add to that an extremely limited (and occasionally hard to execute) number of fighting moves, consistently hopeless animation, and a severe lack of depth, and you get a game that's good for a laugh with a few mates (in the same way as *The Word* can be great fun), but hardly worth shelling out hard cash for. And when we're talking this amount of hard cash? Forget it.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
50%	45%	38%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	40%
39%		

VERDICT: Oh dear – you can but laugh. This silly beat-'em-up is really to be chortled at, not actually *bought*.

ULTRAMAN: THE LAUGHABLE WAY

Fancy entering the (whooo!) secret options screen on *Ultraman*? Well, it's easy – all you have to do is try this: Just hold down START and SELECT on the title screen. See, told you it was easy! (You'll have to decide for yourself if it's worth it.)

UK Release

Game: UN Squadron
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

UN SQUADRON

UN Squadron **gives you the choice of three planes, each with its own abilities (chiefly a trade off between toughness – basically how many hits it can take – and speed). You pays yer money...**

For those of you that don't know, *UN Squadron* is actually based on a famous Japanese comic strip series, *Area 88*, which revolves around a squadron of pilots, in some near-future war. Our heroes are led by one Shin Kazama, who get up to all sorts of japes – and all for the love of a good woman. (Or something.) The game, though it's been renamed for the West, is actually fairly faithful to this source, taking some of the most important characters from the comic and bundling them up in a horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up format.

As with the anime series, our heroes have to earn money by completing missions, not only to upgrade their planes (though this is what you do to start with), but to eventually buy their way out of the warzone and back home. Also as with the anime series, it's absolutely fab. Probably the best horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up on the Super Nintendo, in fact – quite remarkable, considering how long it's been knocking around.

So why's this? Well, the graphics are absolutely gorgeous, for a start – even if some of the sprites look a little small – and the backgrounds in particular are excellent. Yes, there are lots of pretty games around at the moment, and plenty

Sprites are small, as you can see, but they're perfectly formed and do their job just right. Remember, the smaller your plane, the more room you've got to move out of the way of bad guys!

that shout louder than *UN Squadron* does, but everyone who's played the game will tell you it's definitely got something.

There are some interesting ideas in it, too, like the way you don't have to play the levels in a set order (although some only become accessible when you've completed others). And it's really quite tough, too, although in a way that won't have you getting all hot and bothered and frustrated. The really, really great thing about it, though, is one of those hard-to-define ones – it just feels so right. The gameplay is perfectly paced, getting harder all the time (though never in too great a leap), while the controls do exactly what you want them to – and you'd be surprised at how few games that's true of. Even the collision detection is spot on. This is a great game, basically – and best of all, it's actually better than the coin-op it's been converted from!

Hey, don't the submarines around here know they're meant to stay *under*water? Graphics aren't spectacular by current standards, but they do the job.

Our hero goes to the handy between-level weapons shop. All sorts of good stuff is on sale here, and spending wisely is one secret to success in the game.

A TIP IN REVERSE

There's a cheat that actually makes the game *harder*, rather than easier! To access it, go to the options screen and highlight the skill level option. Then reach for Controller 2 and hold down X and A. While doing that you'll be able to use Controller 1 to access a special extra-hard skill level called Gamer. Now this *is* tricky...

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	82%	90%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	91%
92%		

VERDICT: Though it's fairly old now, *UN Squadron* remains one of the best blasters there is – on any system!

WARPSPEED

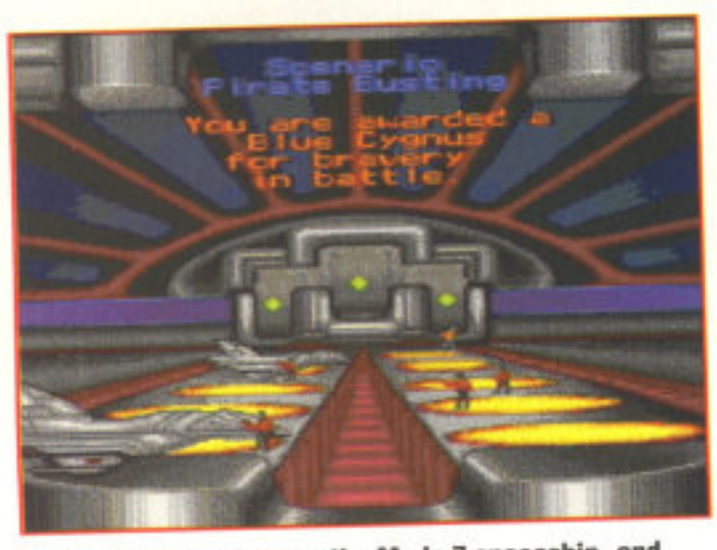
UK Release

Game: Warpspeed
Publisher: Accolade
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

As with *Wing Commander*, *Warpspeed* does its best to present us with an epic space battle backdrop in the style of *Star Wars* – and, as with *Wing Commander*, *Warpspeed* gets knocked into a cocked hat by the sensational *Starwing*. C'est la vie.

What we have here is basically a cockeyed shoot-'em-up, featuring a use of Mode 7 that probably qualifies for the battiest ever award. The thing is, you see, that as Mode 7 can only work on a single background image – and as all the enemy space ships in the game are displayed in Mode 7 so they can zoom in and out of the screen – the sum total of enemy ships you can actually get attacking you at any one time is, er... one.

All you really get are nice enemy ships zooming at you, but little actual game.



Rather than showing you the Mode 7 spaceship, and thus the whole game, here's a nice intro screen.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
34%	22%	30%
GAMELIFE 34%	OVERALL SCORE:	32%

VERDICT: Very thin indeed – there's only really the Mode 7 ships and that's it.

MODE 7

Warpspeed features possibly the most ridiculous use of Mode 7 – the Super Nintendo's wonderful spinny, twisty, warpy background graphics mode – ever, but what are the best? Here are our favourites:

1) *Pilotwings*
Just brilliant, and original, as the detailed backdrop spins and rotates ultra-realistically below your little parachutist or aeroplane sprite.

2) *Super Probotector*
One of the best shoot-'em-ups ever, this features a wonderful Mode 7 looking-down-on-the-action perspective that's (almost) completely unbeatable.

3) *F-Zero*
This early racing classic showcases the graphics mode to great effect, even now.

4) *Axelay*
Lovely flying-through-the-upper-atmosphere effect, complete with curvature of the earth, adds plenty to great Konami blaster.

5) Super Aleste
Some brilliant Mode 7 bosses spice up this excellent Toho shoot-'em-up a treat. The gigantic space station is a particular winner.

WING COMMANDER

For pure space shoot-'em-up fans, the launch of *Starwing* almost completely wipes out *Wing Commander*'s reasons for existance in one fell swoop – as a space blaster this is a very inferior game. For a start, you only get the tiniest window thing on the action, meaning the 3D(ish) enemy sprites never get very big (or fast), which in turn means that space battles are rather plodding, one-tone affairs. The rest of the screen – over half of it – is taken up by a fairly average quality (but unmoving) interior-of-your-spaceship type thing, which could hardly be described as exciting. Basically, the action boils down to a very poor *Battle Zone* clone, which may have been all right ten years ago, but simply can't cut the mustard now. The PC original's atmospheric framing and intro sequences remain intact, but on their own they're just so much fancy window dressing. The state of the art has moved on a few steps since games like this, and *Wing Commander* looks plain old-fashioned.

A nice touch is the way the on-screen joystick waggles about when you move the controller.

ANCESTRY

Wing Commander is but one of a popular current phenomenon – ex-PC or Amiga games that've been converted to run on consoles (often by publishers who don't realise that their formats may well be unsuitable). Others we've played recently include *Super James Pond*, *Populous*, *Populous 2*, *Powermonger*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Bombuzal*, *Another World*, *Gods*, *Sim Earth*, *Sim Ant*, *Lemmings*, *Sim City*... and so on.

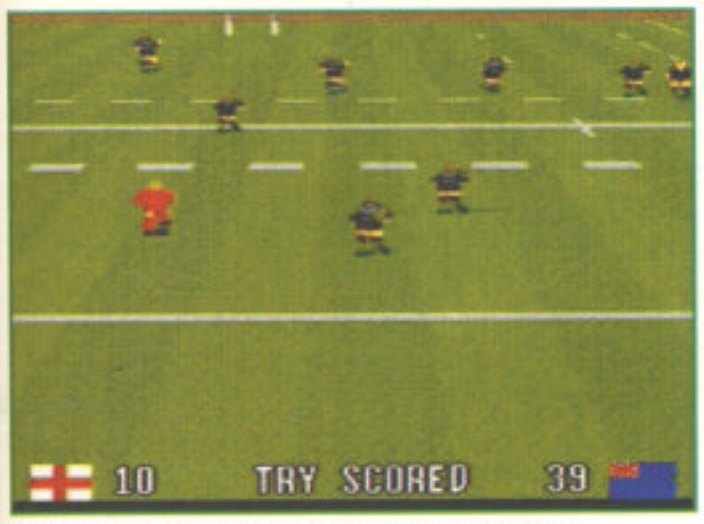
UK Release

Game: Wing Commander
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: In-house
Price: £44.99
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
76%	70%	58%
GAMELIFE 61%	OVERALL SCORE:	60%

VERDICT: Okay, but it just isn't a SNES game at heart.

WORLD CLASS RUGBY



It's England versus New Zealand (or it might be Australia), and everyone seems to be keeping their distance from each other...

UK Release

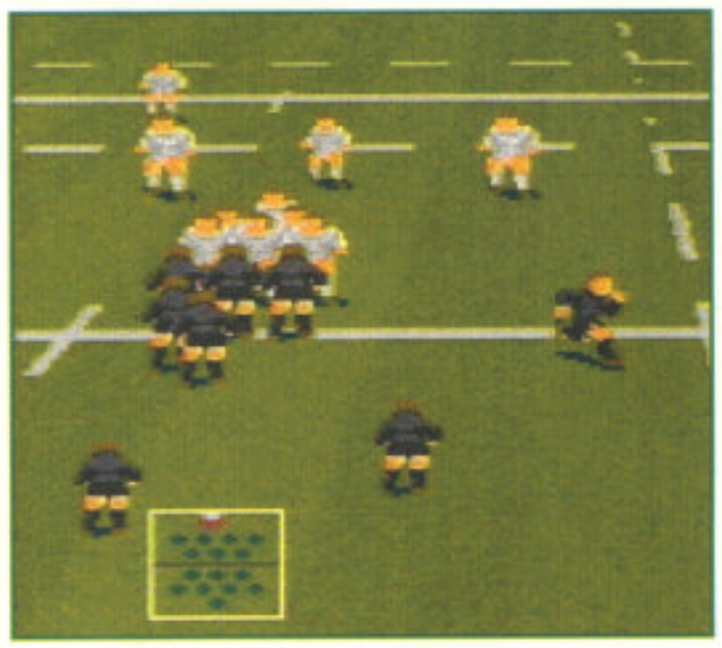
Game: World Class Rugby
Publisher: Imagineer
Developer: Denton Designs
Price: £44.99
Players: 1or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

If you know *Kick Off*, you'll have some idea of how *World Class Rugby* looks – this has been very deliberately designed to be the *Kick Off* of rugger games, which means we get lots of squat little sprites, bags of speed, and plenty of green. We also get a concerted attempt to make it playable for Joe Public, removing some of the more complicated rugby rules from the equation. Tackling is automatic, as are rucks, mauls and scrums, while scrolling is fluid, and your team members respond well to what you tell them. The Mode 7 pitch works a treat too.

Indeed, this has pretty much everything you could ask for of a rugby game. Yes, the action is a bit stilted – halting to show us the scoreboard, or allow for another ruck, far too often – but that's the base game for you. We quite enjoy it, but, being more into football in real life, enjoy soccer games more, and we suspect that'll be the case for most people.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
73%	78%	70%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	74%
80%		

VERDICT: A neat little Super Nintendo rugby game, though, to be honest, the only Super Nintendo rugby game.



The New Zealand fly half pulls out a packet of fruit gums and everyone seems to want one. (Except that chap on the right, presumably.)

WORLD LEAGUE BASKETBALL

UK Release

Game: World League Basketball
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: HAL
Price: £44.99
Players: 1or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

Five minutes from the end of the first quarter, the orange team discover the true meaning of life.

The view spins round as the orange team (or possibly the white team – it's terribly confusing) score a goal.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89%	82%	79%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	84%
84%		

VERDICT: Doesn't play *quite* as well as it looks, but it's still great fun, and really does look quite marvellous.

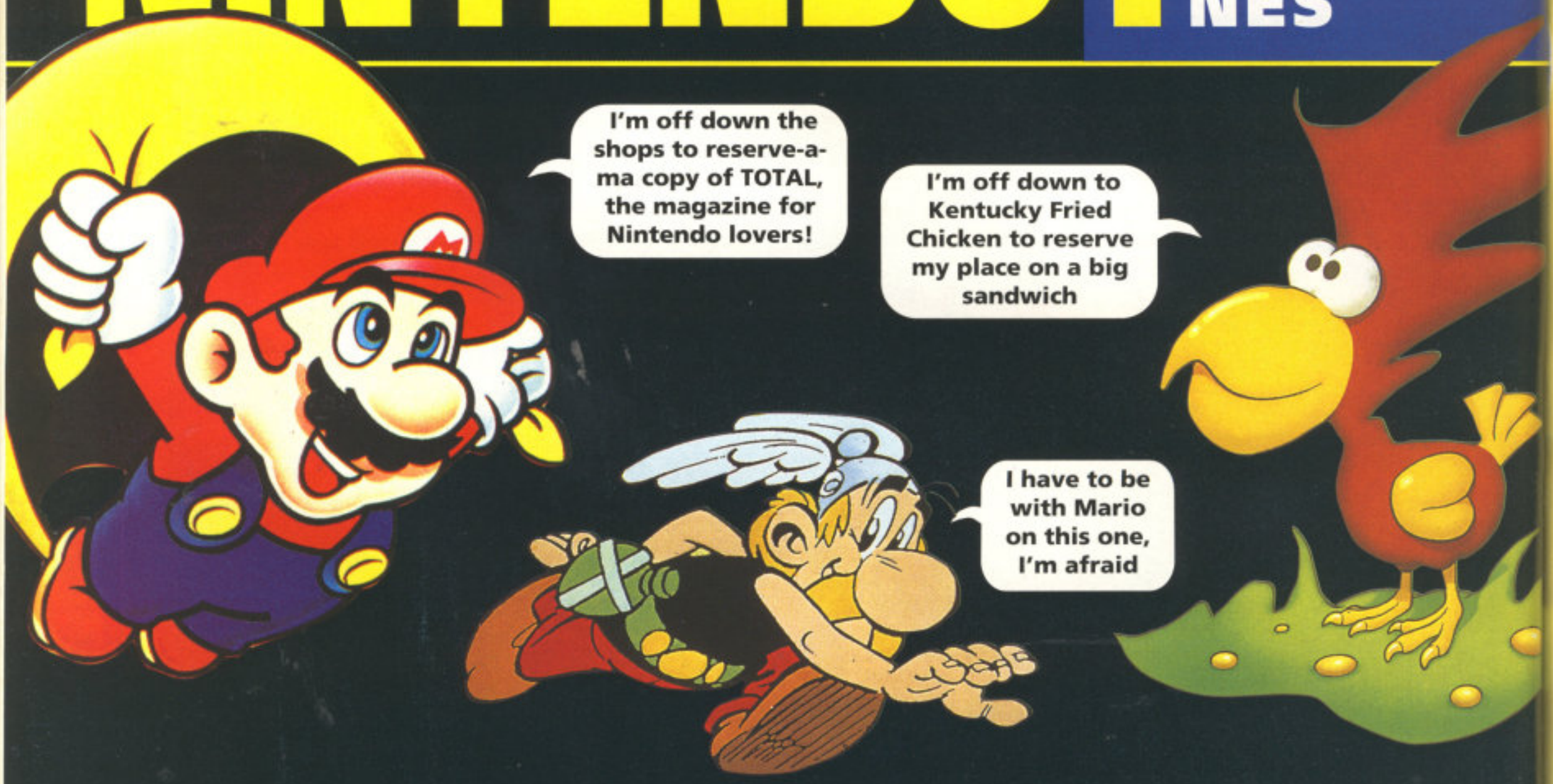
Known as *Super Dunkshot* abroad, and developed by HAL, the basketball game Nintendo have decided to release into the UK is definitely the most technically impressive of those available – even if it doesn't (necessarily) play the best game of basketball. You only have to look at the game to be wowed by it – it features a brilliant Mode 7 court that spins and turns around the players in spectacular fashion. It really is a knock out.

Add to this well-animated players, great sound and bags of atmosphere and you get a fabulous game, and one well worth buying. The only problem is, some people will find all the spinny stuff rather confusing, and real basketball fans might get a slightly more playable game out of an import like *Super NBA Basketball*.

TOTAL!

100% FOR PLAYERS OF NINTENDO

- Super NES
- Game Boy
- NES


I'm off down the shops to reserve-a-ma copy of TOTAL, the magazine for Nintendo lovers!
I'm off down to Kentucky Fried Chicken to reserve my place on a big sandwich
I have to be with Mario on this one, I'm afraid

TOTAL! The essential magazine for **Nintendo** users of every species. Super NES, Game Boy and NES, all the games, all the news and more tips than you can possibly cope with. Out on the third Thursday of every month. Be there!

GOT A NINTENDO? GET A LIFE. GET TOTAL!

MARIO ARTWORK © NINTENDO AMERICA INC.

Phew! So that's every game officially released in the UK so far, then. But what of all the other games out there – the 200 plus available in Japan or America that haven't yet made it over here? Most of them (those demanding a working knowledge of Japanese to play them aside) can be bought in this country on grey import, and played on a UK machine using an adaptor (a process covered in great detail elsewhere in this magazine). But which should you go for? Here's our complete guide to the import 'scene', including a selection of *Super Play* recommendations from those games made recently available...

BUYING FROM ABROAD

Unravelling the import scene

ADAPTORS: WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY WORK AND WHERE TO GET THEM

If you want to play imported Japanese and US games on an official UK machine you'll need an adaptor. Simple as that.

Why do I need an adaptor?
Nintendo like to keep tight control over which games are available in which country, and to that end they've taken precautions to ensure that you can only play the games that have been officially released for your version of the Super Nintendo. The US machine, for instance, has a differently-shaped cartridge slot from European and Japanese machines, so it's only possible to physically plug US carts into it. And, while European and Japanese machines look similar, they've got security chips inside which match up with chips on the carts to make sure Jap machines only run Jap games and European machines only run European ones.

A adaptor bypasses a) the physical differences between machines by extending the cartridge slot to let you plug anything into it, and b) the security chip problem by letting you plug an official UK cart in at the same time as an import one, thus fooling the machine into reading the UK security chip while playing the import game.

Where can I get one?
Once again, try adverts in *Super Play*.

Will it damage my machine?
When you bought your Super Nintendo you'll have found a little slip of paper inside the box saying that Nintendo don't condone the use of adaptors (but then they wouldn't, would they? you might argue) and won't honour the warranty of any machine that's been damaged through the use of one.

Used carefully, though, an adaptor shouldn't cause any problems. (Indeed, we use them all the time at *Super Play*.) The trouble is that, while the Super Nintendo itself has safeguards to prevent you from plugging carts in the wrong way round, or unplugging them while the machine's switched on, adaptors generally don't. And plugging in carts the wrong way round or swapping them with the power on are surefire ways to wreck your SNES. So you've basically got to be very careful.

If you do slip up, though, and your SNES refuses to play, normally all that's happened is that a fuse has blown inside the machine – a simple repair job. It's nearly always the same fuse, though, and that's how Nintendo know what you've been up to. They won't want to touch your machine, more than likely, so you'll probably be forced to seek the help of an independent repair specialist.

Are all adaptors the same?
While some are better built than others, and some have safety features to make sure you plug carts in the right way, they all do essentially the same job. All you've got to do when ordering one is check that you're buying a recent model – one that'll work with all the latest games, including tricky-to-trick things like *Super Mario Kart* and *Starwing*. (Older ones don't, you see.)

Is there any way for game publishers to stop adaptors working?
In theory it only takes a simple piece of code inside the cartridge to double-check that a UK game is running on a UK machine, rendering an adaptor useless. But the vast majority of games simply don't bother, and rely on the hardware's security chip check. We've only actually come across one import game that can't be used through an adaptor – *Firepower 2000*, and that's available in the UK as *Super SWIV* anyway. Whether publishers will start incorporating this code into games as a matter of course remains to be seen – there have been rumours that Nintendo mean to ask them to do so – but so far there's no sign of it yet.

Imported *Starfox* carts use custom chips which can fool adaptors. Check yours can cope before buying.

Although the selection of games in UK shops is increasing by the day, a recent survey of *Super Play* readers showed that nearly half buy games imported from Japan and the US, in defiance of Nintendo UK's efforts to keep the UK market under a tight rein. Here we'll explain why they do it, how you can join them, and the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.

WHY BUY IMPORT GAMES?

Lots of people do it, and businesses have sprung up all over the country to make the task of buying Japanese and US games easier. But why?

● More choice

American and Japanese Super Nintendo owners can currently take their pick from around 250 Super Nintendo games – a huge number. And new games are appearing at the rate of 20 or 30 a month.

But walk into any mainstream UK games shop and you'll be lucky to find 50, with most shops carrying far fewer. The reasons for this are numerous. First, the Japanese and US markets had a head start of a couple of years before the UK launch of the Super Nintendo, and UK publishers are struggling to catch up. Anything that gets published here has to first be approved by Nintendo, and that can take a lot of time.

Secondly, although the European market is becoming increasingly important, many American and Japanese publishers simply don't operate over here. For example, you'll search in vain for anything by Square Soft, a Japanese company whose *Final Fantasy* series has been enormously successful in both Japan and the US. Companies are gradually setting up European operations, but for many companies' games we must rely on European publishers picking up the rights – UK publisher Ocean distributes Seta's *F1 Exhaust Heat* in Europe, for example, but there's no news as to whether we'll be seeing *Exhaust Heat II*.

And, because of the relative age of the US and Japanese markets, some games are deemed too old to be worth releasing over here. For instance, Konami have no plans to release either *Gradius III* or *Legend Of The Mystical Ninja* in the UK – both of which are very good games.

So, although the stuation is improving, for the time being buying on import is the only way to be sure of getting the game you want.

● Getting games sooner

While the idea of the 'simultaneous world-wide release' (a game being released at roughly the same time all over the world) is catching on in some sectors of the Super Nintendo market, we're still having to wait several months between most games coming out in Japan and the US and the same games being released in the UK.

It's difficult to explain why. In some cases a publisher might want to see how well a game fares in its home market before thinking about a UK release. In others, the company simply hasn't got time to manufacture enough cartridges to serve all the world at once. But in most cases it's simply 'one of those things'.

Buy a game on import, however, and you can be playing it within days of its Japanese or US release. That's very important to many people.

● Lower prices

It used to be the case that imported games were a few pounds cheaper than their UK equivalents, even after allowing for shipping costs and importers' margins. But with recent upsets in exchange rates this has generally ceased to be the case, and prices are about the same. There *are* still savings to be made, though, particularly when a UK game appears to have been priced unusually high – you should be able to shave about a tenner off the price of *Mickey's Magical Quest* (£59.95) by going to a grey importer.

AND THE DISADVANTAGES?

You'll need to buy an adaptor. These are discussed in detail elsewhere on these pages.

- Games imported from Japan will obviously be in Japanese. This isn't a huge problem in most cases – platform games and shoot-'em-ups, for example – but you'd be foolish to buy the Japanese version of *Dragon Quest V* if you don't read Japanese. And, of course, manuals will be completely incomprehensible. (*Super Play*'s reviews always make it clear when Japanese text is likely to be a problem with import games.)
- You won't be able to use Nintendo's helpline. If you phone up Club Nintendo they'll be happy to give you help on a game that's been officially released in this country, but requests for assistance with obscure imported games will usually come to nothing.
- Er... (We can't think of any other disadvantages.)

If you're interested in buying imported games, the advertisements in any issue of *Super Play* would be a good place to start.

2020 SUPER BASEBALL

Game: 2020 Super Baseball
Publisher: K Amusement Leasing Co
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 12 Mbit

Don't let the fact that there aren't any baseball games available in the UK fool you. (Apart from the forthcoming *Cal Ripkin Jr* from Mindscape.) There are absolutely millions of them available on import, from both the US and Japan where they're equally potty about the sport. While there are a few good American ones, the Japanese generally make the best job of them, and *2020 Super Baseball* is a prime example.

The first thing you'll notice about *2020 Baseball* – apart from the fact that it's really good, and really fast, of course – is that the players are all robots, not humans!

The second thing you'll notice is that the rules are a bit weird, while the third thing is that it can be a jolly good idea to get *certain* fielders to dive for the ball...

Like most Japanese baseball games it adds a certain something of its own to the original sport – in this case robotic players. (No, really.) They're really well animated, and make the game seem much more action-packed and exciting than is the norm for this sort of thing. And it is actually a very fast-moving game – an unheard of concept for a baseball simulation. It's consequently great fun to play, especially with two players.

If you're after something a little more straightlaced, we'd recommend *Pro*

Baseball League '92 or *Super Famistar 2* – both more traditional games. But *2020* really is the best.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90%	74%	84%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	85%
86%		

VERDICT: Though it's packed with robots, and is really rather weird, this plays a *great* game of baseball.

COSMO GANG

Game: Cosmo Gang
Publisher: Namco
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Now is this weird looking, or what? Underneath the odd, but cute, graphics, however, it's basically *Galaxians*, and as such extremely playable.

Cosmo Gang is included more for curiosity value than anything else. It's a game for people who can't cope with the thought that *Space Invaders* might have finally died a death, despite valiant attempts to revive it by coin-ops like *Galaxians* and *Galaga*.

And, as such, it's a pretty smart game. The graphics are impossible to fault – scrummy backgrounds and really cute sprites – and there are plenty of original ideas in it. Some of the pick-upable weapons are especially good, like the jack-in-a-box the scares all the aliens rigid. *Space Invaders* never had it so good.

But, at the end of the day, it's just left right shoot, left right shoot, and that, it has to be said, is really not enough to justify the asking price.

Incidentally, there's also a spin-off game, *Cosmo Gang: The Puzzle*, which features characters from the shoot-'em-up in a *Tetrissy* puzzle game. It's even weirder (but not really worth buying).

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84%	82%	70%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	70%
64%		

VERDICT: Fans of the old coin-ops will go completely ape over this pretty – and very cute – modern-day incarnation.

Here they all come – saddled (or blessed, depending on your viewpoint) with old fashioned gameplay, *Cosmo Gang* tries to make up for it in prettiness.

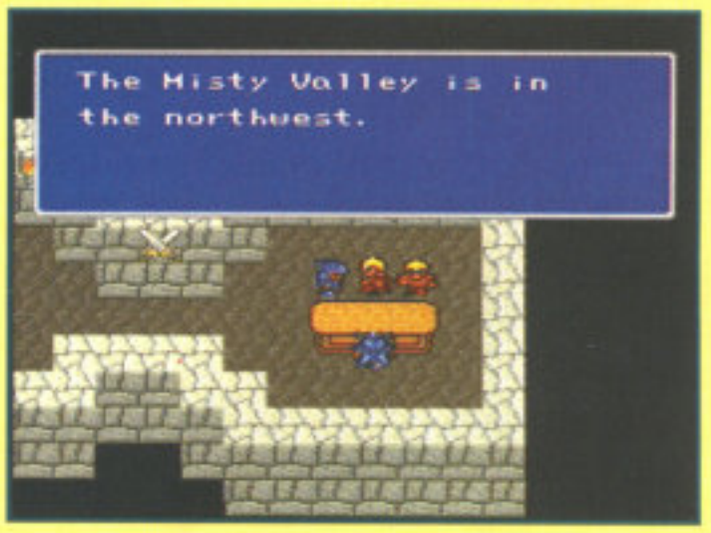
FINAL FANTASY II

Game: Final Fantasy II
Publisher: Square Soft
Developer: In-house
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

Role playing games are real favourites in Japan, but rarely translated into English – something you can't help feeling really is our loss when you see things like this.

Role-playing games are by far the most popular sort of game in Japan – both in terms of number of titles and number of copies sold – but few make it to the UK. Just *Zelda* so far, in fact. This can partly be put down to the effort required to translate them into English. But in the case of the *Final Fantasy* series that's no excuse – the job's already been done for the American market. (*Final Fantasy II* is actually the American version of – confusingly – the Japanese game *Final Fantasy IV*, and it's the American version you should be sure to buy if you want to be able to tell what on earth's going on.)

No, the main problem is that Western players simply find this sort of thing too daunting. That's a shame because, while *Final Fantasy II* doesn't have the instant accessibility of *Zelda*, it doesn't take all that long to get to grips with, and is quite a bit more challenging in the long run. It's got proper fighting seqences, and you can build up a party of characters as you go along. And, while the graphics are nothing special, the music's simply brilliant. Good stuff.



Much of the gameplay involves talking to various people and getting them to point you in the right direction. Meanwhile, the fabulous background music plays on.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
68%	88%	91%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	90%
90%		

VERDICT: Fantasy role playing games don't get brought over that often, but on the strength of this they should.

Yikes! Typical of many role players, this one included, is the-screen-where-you-have-to-fight-monsters. As usual, this is done in a D&D sort of a way, with hit points etc.

GRADIUS III

Game: Gradius III
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Players: 1
Cart ROM: 4 Mbit

We're not including *Gradius III* because it's a particularly great game (it's pretty good, but getting on a bit now) but simply because it's so important. It's part of the *Gradius/Nemesis* series of shoot-'em-ups that forms the mainstay of

Oh dear – it's in seemingly simple scenes like this, where something as unimpressive (in Super NES terms) as this snake appears, that slow-down really gets bad.

Konami's output – the same series that has spawned spin-offs like *Parodius* and, in a way, *Axelay* and *Pop'n Twin Bee*. And for that reason it seems rather odd that it isn't actually available in the UK – Konami reckon that it's just too old to be worth releasing here.

In a way they're probably right. Like so many early Super Nintendo games, *Gradius III* suffers from the slow-down that indicated that the programmers hadn't really got to grips with the Super Nintendo's hardware. And it really gets quiet bad at times, making it hard to concentrate on the game.

But when things are running smoothly, *Gradius III* is an excellent shoot-

In graphical terms most of *Gradius III* isn't that impressive – it's based on an old coin-op, but a great one, so it's gameplay that shines here, not beauty.

'em-up. The graphics are gorgeous in places – though, to be honest, most of them are very old fashioned looking now, with tiny sprites and weedy explosions – but the music's great, and it's very rewarding to play. Indeed, the gameplay's even better, probably, than *Super R-Type* (a game which *has* been released here).

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85%	90%	75%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	74%
71%		

VERDICT: Terrible slow-down ruin what would otherwise be an excellent (if old-fashioned) shoot-'em-up.

LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA

Game: Legend Of The Mystical Ninja
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

One of the joys of *Legend Of The Mystical Ninja* is that just about every house or tent you come across contains some sort of shop or whatever to enter and try.

As with *Gradius III*, Konami UK have decided that *Legend Of The Mystical Ninja* is a bit too old, and has been around on import for too long, for it to be worth their while releasing the game here. But while we could probably get by without *Gradius III*, *Legend Of The Mystical Ninja* is simply too good a game to ignore.

It's a role-playing game at heart (there's lots of adventuring to do, shops to go into and so on), but one which takes a scrolling side-on perspective that makes it look a bit more like a beat-'em-up. Either way it's brilliant fun to play, with attractive graphics and music and a huge playing area to explore. There's much more to it than first meets the eye. In fact,

Take that! Ridiculous baddies keep attacking you (though walking fast gets you past many of them) with all sorts of weapons, from spears to a big, wet fish.

some shops are actually amusement arcades, one of which contains a playable version of the original *Gradius* game, perfect in every detail. You wonder whether they're just trying to show off.

Legend of the Mystical Ninja is an essential part of Super Nintendo history, and a game that'll keep you amused for weeks. Write to Konami. Pressure them into releasing the game here. Or, at the very least, make sure you secure yourself a copy on import.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90%	90%	92%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	91%
90%		

VERDICT: Though it looks like it'll never be released in the UK, *LOTMN* is one of the true greats, and worth finding.

KIKIKAIKAI

Game: Kikikaikai
Publisher: Natsume
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Now is that cute, or is that cute? Your little racoon chum just has to be one of the most appealing little video game characters we've ever seen.

A name like that is as good an excuse as any to return a game to the shelf whence it came as quickly as possible. But, retitled *Pocky & Rocky*, *Kikikaikai* did actually make it across the Pacific to the US – always a good omen for an eventual European release. But the game's been around since the beginning of this year, and there's still no sign of that omen being fulfilled, so for the time being it has

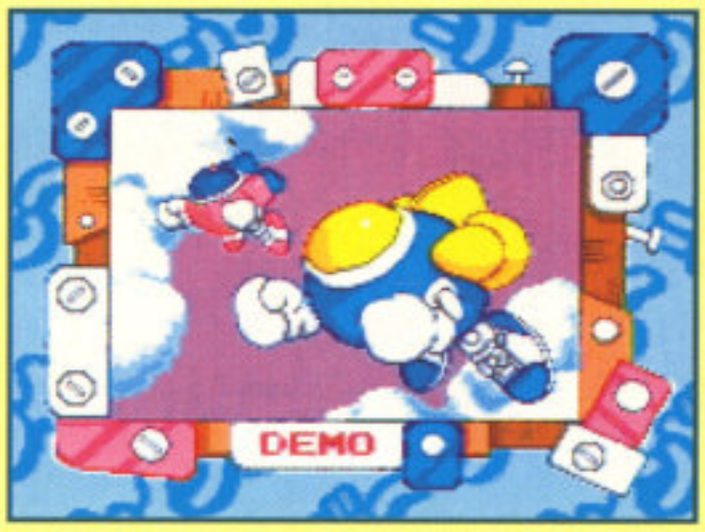
The graphics in *Kikikaikai* sometimes get very spooky, with lashings of fog (as here) or other neat graphical effects showing their faces regularly.

to be considered import-only.

And it's a pretty essential purchase. The first thing that'll strike you about it is the graphics – wonderfully colourful and really slick. But the gameplay shines through, too. It's dead simple to pick up and play – basically this is just an explore-and-shoot-'em-up – but there are lots of little subtleties to the gameplay, like the way Manuke the racoon can use his tail to deflect enemy fire. Two can play at the same time, too, which is always a big advantage. And, despite looking cute, *Kikikaikai* is a big, tough game that gets better and better as the levels unfold, and it'll take you ages to finish.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86%	84%	81%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	82%
80%		

VERDICT: Cute and cuddly on the outside, big and tough on the inside, *Kikikaikai* just itches to be played.



In case you were wondering quite what our heroes were in the other shot, here all is revealed – yes, they're little space ships with big boxing gloves on (of course).

Genma the panda (we'll explain who he really is in the next caption) fights an alternative coloured version of himself – very silly, very funny, and pretty hard.

POP'N TWINBEE

Game: Pop'n Twinbee
Publisher: Konami
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit

Pop'n Twinbee looks absolutely gorgeous. In fact, while it doesn't have the sock-you-between-the-eyes 3D scrolling of *Axelay*, Konami's other big shoot-'em-up, its graphics are just as good (in a more pastelly, rose-tinted sort of way). The backgrounds a great and the sprites are simply fantastic – detailed, original and delightfully animated.

The only trouble is that, while *Pop'n Twinbee* looks completely out of this world, it doesn't actually play astoundingly well – more sort of 'okay'. It's just a case of shooting and dodging the baddies for level after level, something that's much too easy on the 'easy' setting, and even easier if you take advantage of the simultaneous two-player option. True, harder settings are more challenging, and Pop and Twinbee themselves have got some neat weapons up their sleeves. But it's all a bit humdrum.

Still, *Pop'n Twinbee* looks great and, to be fair, is good fun for a bit. No UK release has been announced as we write, though, and although Konami UK tend to get most things out eventually it'll probably take a few more months.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
95%	85%	82%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	84%
72%		

VERDICT: Lovely, lovely graphics mark this great shoot-'em-up, though it ain't as playable as it wants to be.

Shoot-'em-ups rarely – no, make that never – look any better than this, for *Pop'n Twinbee* is a multicoloured graphical marvel, packed full of little visual puns.

RANMA 1/2

Game: Ranma 1/2 (+ Part 2)
Publisher: NCS Masiya
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8/12 Mbit

If the Japanese aren't playing role playing games, the chances are you'll find them playing one of the millions of *Street Fighter II* clones that have flooded the country recently. Few of them are any good, and even fewer will ever make it to the UK. But the *Ranma 1/2* games are among the better ones.

Er, and you did read that right – 'games'. We're actually looking at two, here – *Ranma 1/2* and *Ranma 1/2 Part 2*. They're based on a bizarre Japanese TV series where the main characters keep mutating into things like pandas when they get wet. Only the first game seems to have the mutating in, though, making it the better bet of the two (though it's really a toss-up).

Here's Ranma him/herself – a young kung-fu expert who, through a magical curse, turns into a girl when wet. It could be worse though – his dad becomes a panda!

They've both got attractive graphics and a decent range of moves, but in the long-run, like so many beat-'em-ups, they pale next to *Street Fighter II*. A shame, that, as they're really not bad taken on your own.

Although the first *Ranma* game did make it to the States after a fashion (as *Street Combat*, the same game with the sprites replaced by charmless American versions), a UK release of either seems very unlikely.

Action from the second *Ranma 1/2* game – both essentially similar beat-'em-ups, but with some different characters in them. Graphics are lovely.

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
82%	78%	77%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	71%
64%		

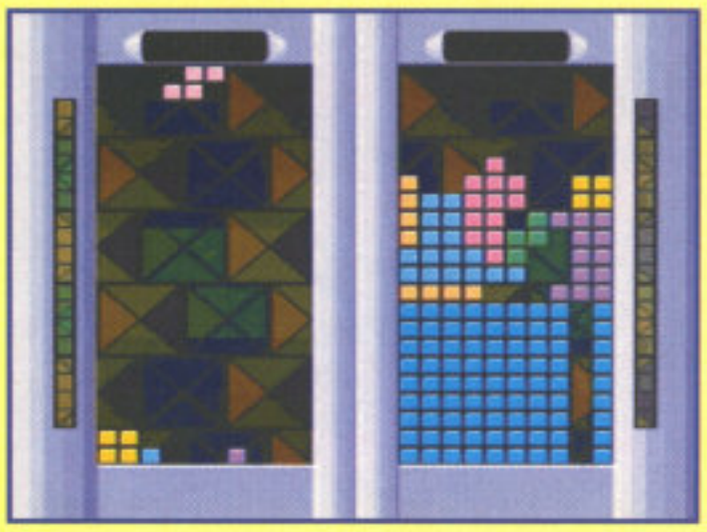
VERDICT: If we had to chose between these two pretty beat-'em-ups we'd go for the trickier first one, but it's close.

SUPER TETRIS 2 + BOMBLISS

Game: Super Tetris 2 + Bombliss
Publisher: Bullet-Proof Software
Developer: In-house
Players: 1 or 2 simultaneously
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit + BB

You're bound to have heard of *Tetris* – that incredibly simple puzzle game with blocks drifting down the screen that you've got to fit together an attempt to avoid the whole thing clogging up. You'll also know how impossible it is to stop playing once you've started.

But *Tetris 2 + Bombliss* goes a step further. (Hence its name.) As well as providing an excellent no-frills implementaion of *Tetris*, it also provides a great two-player version (where lines removed from one player's stack are added to the other's) and *Bombliss*, which is similar but with exploding bombs. There's an awful lot there.



For those who don't know, it's like this – just twiddle your falling blocks so they form a solid line, which then disappears. You lose if the blocks pile up to the top.

The only real problem is that *Tetris* is an inherently simple game, even with the various embellishments this version provides, and it seems rather out of place running on a Super Nintendo. Something like a Game Boy seems much more fitting. Still, this is an excellent version of an excellent game, and it would be a crime if no-one published it over here.

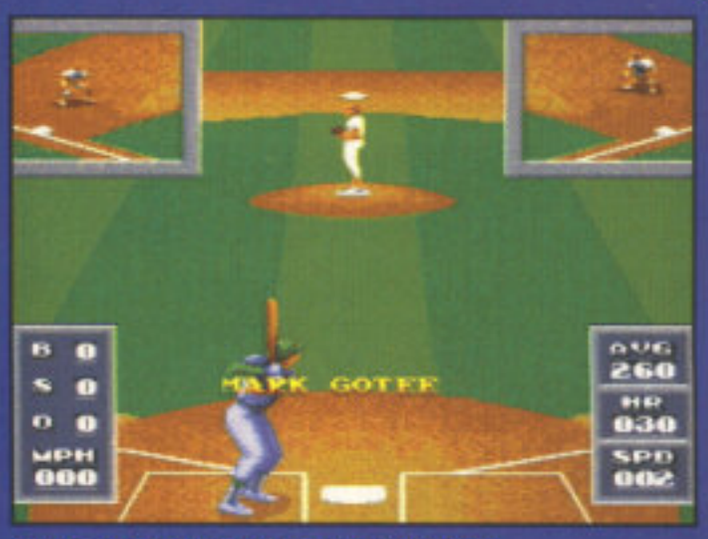
GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
58%	63%	84%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	83%
90%		

VERDICT: *Tetris* is an all-time great, and, though this is expensive, it happens to be one of the best versions there is.

AND COMING SOON

Don't get the idea that import games *never* appear officially in the UK, however. Most of the good ones do, if not right away then three or four months later. (It's only generally really obscure games, really bad games, or really hard-to-translate ones – like most RPGs – that never see the light of day in English.) Anyway, to emphasise our point, here's a sample of the sort of stuff that's currently only officially available in America and Japan that you can expect to see released over here soon. There are some real goodies amongst them...

BATMAN RETURNS
(Konami)
An excellent adaptation of the film. It's really just a scrolling beat-'em-up, but it's the best around, with plenty of moves and all the characters and atmosphere from the film. Batman himself looks particularly good, especially when he gets out his Batrope.
87%
UK Release: July



CAL RIPKIN JR BASEBALL
(Mindscape)
British baseball fans, scarce though they may be, aren't exactly spoilt for choice at the moment. In fact, *Cal Ripkin*'ll be the only baseball game around. It's pretty good, though – an American-style adaptation with solid gameplay and no-nonsense graphics.
70%
UK Release: July

SUPER BOMBERMAN
(Hudson Soft)
The idea behind this is incredibly simple – just drop bombs and run for it, hoping the baddies get caught in the blast and you don't. But with a four-player adaptor and three friends it's astoundingly good fun, and probably the best multi-player game ever. An absolute must.
92%
UK Release: August

CYBERNATOR
(Konami)
Robotic exoskeltons are big in Japan (if still a figment of the imagination) and a go on *Cybernator* will make you realise why. It's a top-notch shoot-'em-up which puts you in the cockpit of an exoskeleton and lets you blow everything to bits with a machine gun. Most satisfying.
91%
UK Release: July

SOLSTICE II: EQUINOX
(Sony Imagesoft)
You don't see many isometirc 3D games on the SNES, which is odd, as if this is anything to go by it can manage them just fine. *Solstice II* is a big, involving game with lots of puzzles to solve. The graphics are good, but the music is simply wonderful. A top-quality game.
90%
UK Release: TBA

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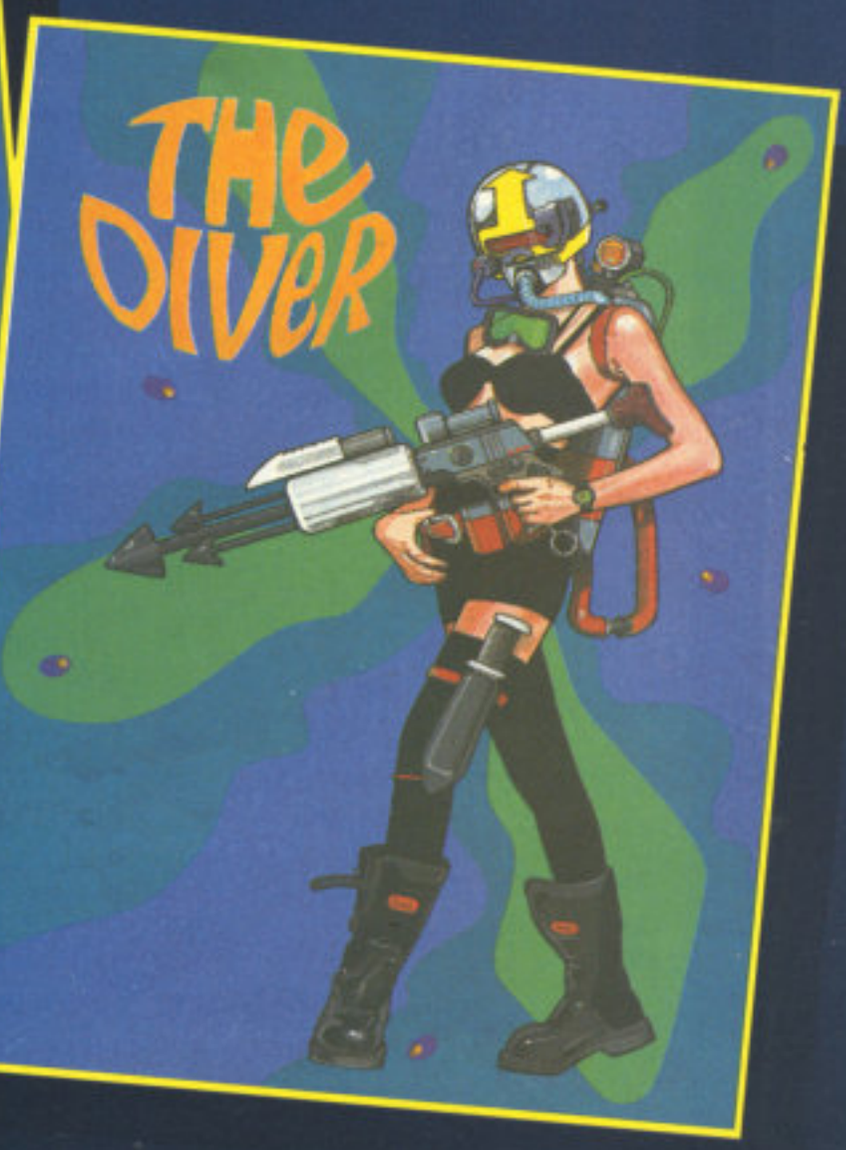

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